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1836.

H. FISHER, R. FISHER, AND P. JACKSON, PRINTERS.



## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

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THE chief design of the following work is to prove, by the production of appropriate evidence, that the English Presbyterians, at the era of the foundation and settlement upon permanent trusts of their meeting-houses and principal endowments, were a body of Christian professors, who attached the highest importance to orthodoxy, in reference to the great peculiar doctrines of Christianity, especially the Trinity and the Atonement. This fact, notorious and indisputable as it may appear to persons conversant with their history, has been denied in most positive and confident terms by the authors of several pamphlets, published in 1834, on the occasion of a judicial argument before the Vice-Chancellor of England, and the decree pronounced by His Honour in the case of charitable trusts founded by Dame Sarah Hewley in the years 1704 and 1707. The author has long felt a lively interest in the history, and cherished a warm admiration for the character, of the ministers, (most of them nominally *Presbyterians*,) who, in 1662, resigned their livings to preserve conscience inviolate, and has devoted much time to an examination of their published lives and writings. The sentiment of veneration entertained for those excellent men, the fathers of Presbyterian Nonconformity,—who afterwards became founders of a large and flourishing religious community,—operated as a principal inducement to undertake the present Inquiry, in order to rescue them from allegations exceedingly injurious to their memory.

The general assertions, in reference to the Presbyterian founders, which the writer has attempted to disprove, may be reduced to the following heads :

1. ' Their principles being latitudinarian, they rejected all creeds or public declaratory Confessions of Faith, abjured all human symbols and formularies, professed no particular doctrine, and held no fixed theological opinions.

2. 'Their *distinguishing* and *paramount* principle—unrestricted freedom of inquiry—precluded their cherishing *zealous* regard for *any* peculiar tenets, restrained them from demanding Confessions of Faith on *any* occasions, or taking active measures to hinder the entrance or spread of erroneous tenets among the members of their churches, and led them to approve the conduct and encourage the ministry of those who widely deviated from the orthodox standard, and embraced opinions, in reference to important doctrines generally considered as highly erroneous.
3. 'As they refused to interfere with doctrine, and granted indulgence within their churches to *all* theological opinions, they were also advocates for a toleration by the civil magistrate, extending to persons who avowed and propagated tenets generally regarded as blasphemous and intolerable.'

In contradiction to these statements, evidence from the writings of their most eminent divines is produced, in support of the following positions—

I. They embraced, from deliberate conviction, a system of doctrine generally in accordance with that maintained in the writings of Calvin; adopted the documents compiled by their predecessors in the Westminster Assembly of Divines, as their standard of orthodoxy; and used the Shorter Catechism, as their accredited symbol or formula of theological belief. Their ministers also readily complied with the requisition of the Toleration Act, in 1689, to subscribe the doctrinal articles of the Established Church.

II. Their leading ministers in the metropolis acknowledged the great importance of doctrinal purity, professed their readiness to disavow Arminian tenets, and indignantly repelled the charge of abetting Socinian and Pelagian errors in reference to the great cardinal doctrine of justification before God, in a method purely gratuitous, through faith in the redemption obtained by the meritorious obedience and propitiatory oblation of a Divine surety and substitute. The basis on which they considered this great doctrine (called by Luther and by them esteemed, '*articulus stantis vel cadentis Ecclesiæ*,') to rest, was—the fact of Atonement, compensation to public justice, or satisfaction to the Divine law and government, having been made for human transgression by the vicarious punishment endured in the penal sufferings and piacular death of God's *own* and *only* Son. They required public Confessions on some special occasions, and their ministers invariably demanded a full and explicit profession of THE ORTHODOX

FAITH from all candidates for the ministerial function, previously to formal admission into that sacred office by the solemn rite of ordination. They took other precautionary measures to secure the orthodoxy of their successors, particularly that of instructing the youth of their congregations in the doctrines taught in the Assembly's Shorter Catechism;—an office which they considered as an important branch of ministerial duty. They regarded the peculiar tenet of Arius, when broached in England, with feelings of strong disapprobation; excluding or ejecting from the pulpits of their chapels ministers who had imbibed similar doctrines, though involving a less grievous amount of error.

III. They reprobated and condemned in the strongest terms the heresy of Socinus; defending themselves most earnestly from charges which implied the least sympathy or participation with it, and invariably speaking of the peculiar tenets of that heresiarch in terms expressive of the utmost aversion and disgust, giving, moreover, their direct support and sanction to measures by which the abettors of those tenets, whom they denounced as blasphemers and stigmatized as infidels, might be restrained and punished by the civil magistrate.

Such are the facts which the author has attempted in the following pages to substantiate by evidence. The method adopted for this purpose, as the only satisfactory mode of arriving at a just conclusion, has been truly described as "the usual and authorised method of obtaining the real opinions of any extensive society—an appeal to the publications of their most eminent men."\*

The length to which the work has extended far exceeds what the writer originally intended, as the task undertaken involved an extent of research, and a degree of labour, much beyond his anticipation. From a wish to avoid even the appearance of mutilating the language, or perverting the sense, of any author whom he has quoted, he considered it generally preferable to insert extended and continuous extracts.

The writers on whom he has freely animadverted, deal largely in positive assertion and gratuitous assumption, but very sparingly in proofs. The scanty evidence adduced in support of the allegations contained in the largest of their publications, is drawn chiefly from the writings of latitudinarian divines of the Church of England: the mass of proof supplied in the following pages has been derived almost entirely

\* "If these be not the proper standard of appeal, by what other means can their opinions be obtained?" Translator's Preface to Pascal's *Provincial Letters*. Edition 8vo. 1816. p. x.

from the works of eminent English Presbyterian divines, particularly Mr. Baxter and Dr. Daniel Williams, who acted the part of leaders, and on some important occasions professed to write in the name of their brethren : some of the productions issued by them partake, therefore, of the nature of public documents or official statements.

The numerous engagements and frequent interruptions, in the midst of which the work was composed, did not allow the writer sufficient time accurately to digest the materials collected ; but he endeavoured as much as possible to arrange them in chronological order. He has occupied the interval since its first publication, so far as a serious illness of many weeks' continuance, and various other demands on his time and attention, would allow, in revising and correcting it ; and has availed himself of a suggestion made from several different quarters, which at once commended itself to his own judgement, of dividing the work into separate portions, prefixing brief notices of the principal topics discussed in them. The book, with all its remaining imperfections, (and the author is deeply sensible that many yet remain,) will, he trusts, be found not altogether destitute of claim to some degree of authority as a record of important facts, drawn from authentic sources, and verified by accurate references.

*April*, 1836.

J. W.

P.S. A review inserted in an Unitarian magazine for August last, of which a separate impression has been since published and advertised, was probably intended as an answer to the *Historical Inquiry*. Although it appeared to the writer scarcely worthy of particular notice, yet, as he considered that a refutation would serve to confirm his argument, by shewing the futility of the only attempt made to invalidate or impair its force, he prepared, for the purpose of being annexed as an appendix, a distinct and full reply ; but on further consideration he determined not to increase the already swollen bulk of the present work. Should circumstances hereafter occur which may induce him to engage farther in this discussion, what he has written may form part of a separate publication, in which he will probably endeavour to concentrate the evidence, by making it bear on a single point, namely, —Did the Presbyterian founders regard their Socinian contemporaries as Christians ?—*July* 4, 1836.

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AN  
HISTORICAL INQUIRY  
CONCERNING  
THE ENGLISH PRESBYTERIANS.

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ALLEGED DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PRESBYTERIANS AND INDEPENDENTS PRIOR TO 1691—EVIDENCE FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAXTER, THE LEADING PRESBYTERIAN DIVINE—IN REFERENCE TO THE USE OF CREEDS AND CONFESSIONS OF FAITH—THE EXTENT OF TOLERATION—CHURCH GOVERNMENT, DISCIPLINE, AND COMMUNION—THE GENERAL AGREEMENT IN DOCTRINE, AND UNION FORMED BETWEEN THE TWO BODIES IN 1691.

THE writers on whose productions the following pages freely animadvert, have taken much pains to represent the English Presbyterian and the Congregational Nonconformists, as originally, and during the entire period to which the following pages relate,\* religious communities totally separate, possessing no mutual affinity, and capable of no friendly alliance or harmonious co-operation, as resembling, in fact, the border tribes of feudal barbarism—rival, hostile, and conflicting sects. “Every stage of the history of the English Presbyterians,” says a writer who speaks in the name of an Association recently formed, “marks a distinguishing difference between them and the Independents.”† “For a short time,” says Mr. Hunter, “there was an attempt at union of the Independents and the Presbyterians. The idea was, that they were united in the same cause—the doing good by a more energetic and effective ministry than the church provided. The union began in 1691, and was dissolved in 1694. It was impossible that two parties, so different in sentiment, should act

\* A. D. 1660—1714, afterwards generally indicated by “*the period in question.*”

† “The History, Opinions, and present Legal Position of the English Presbyterians;” published under the direction of “The English Presbyterian Association”—1834, p. 30. I have assumed that this was written by an individual.

cordially together for any long time.”\* At the beginning of the last century, “the Presbyterians were a class who “had long been separated from the Independents,†—the latter “were opposed to the former, not simply in discipline, but also “in doctrine,—the distinction between them was chiefly doctrinal,‡—the two bodies were then opposed to each other on “the same essential points” on which the modern Independents and Unitarians are now opposed.§ Such are the assertions; the reader shall now be informed of the real facts.

The differences existing between the two bodies, prior to the Restoration, were entirely of an ecclesiastical nature. The fierce zealots for a national establishment, founded on the divine right of Presbytery, viewed all other opinions concerning church government, through the distorting medium of prejudice, and regarded their advocates and adherents with the malign aspect of intolerance; but, in the eyes of moderate men of both opinions, these differences appeared inconsiderable, and had not the absurd attempt been urged forward on the part of the high Presbyterians, to enforce a strict uniformity of practice by authority of law, they might have been speedily accommodated. In 1643, the famous Assembly of Divines was convened at Westminster, by order of both Houses of Parliament, to give their opinion and advice concerning church matters. Five of these, who were Independents, and were called “The Dissenting Brethren,” presented to the two Houses a statement of their principles, entitled “An Apologetical Narration,” printed this year, in which they speak of their agreement with the greatest part of their brethren in all points of *doctrine* as notorious and undisputed; and represent their differences about “worship and discipline” as comparatively small. Mr. Herle, a moderate Presbyterian, afterwards prolocutor of the Assembly, in the preface to a tract against Independency, (4to. 1643,) thus addresses some friends, for whose satisfaction it had been written:—“However, for the difference between us and our

\* “The Attorney General *versus* Shore. An Historical Defence of the Trustees of Lady Hewley’s Foundations, and of the claims upon them of the Presbyterian Ministry of England. By the Rev. Joseph Hunter, F.S.A.—1834.” p. 17.

† The History, Opinions, &c. p. 30.

‡ Ib. p. 35.

§ Ib. p. 4.

brethren that are for Independency, 'tis nothing so great as you seemed to conceive it. We do but (with *Abraham* and *Lot*) take several ways: we are (as *Abraham* speaks) *brethren still*, and (as they were) ready to rescue each other, on all occasions, against the common enemy. Our difference is such as doth, at most, but *ruffle* a little the *fringe*, not any way *rend* the *garment* of Christ: 'tis so far from being a *fundamental*, that 'tis scarce a *material* one—nay, not so much as the *form*, 'tis but the better or worse way for the exercise of the same form of discipline, that is in question; the *that it be*, and *what it be*, and *which it be*, is agreed on amongst us; 'tis but the *whose it be* we differ in, and herein too, not so much *whose* neither, as *where it be*, whether in every congregation apart, or of the same men joined with the like of other congregations in a Synod."

One of the writers now to be examined, while endeavouring to establish, by an appeal to history, what he calls "the great practical distinction between the Presbyterians and the Independents," declares that "human symbols of belief and confessions of faith were constantly objected to by the former, who censured the imposition, and opposed all compilations of creeds."\*

I admit that the Presbyterians did not impose or authoritatively require subscription to any creed, confession, or articles; but neither did the Independents, who objected on principle to such impositions, equally with their Presbyterian brethren. But while both opposed the strict enforcement of creeds, considered as *tests*, and used for that purpose, neither of them objected to the compiling of documents for the purpose of declaring to the world their opinions on theological topics. The Westminster ecclesiastical council, in which the Presbyterians were the largest and prevailing party, drew up three documents of this description, which, though intended to be applied to different uses, all embody the substance of their doctrinal tenets, or what they regarded as the truth contained in the Holy Scriptures. These were:—a Confession of Faith, and a longer and a shorter Catechism. They had previously

\* "The History, Opinions," &c. pp. 18, 37. This publication is quoted in subsequent pages, under the abbreviated form—"Hist."

revised the first fifteen of the Thirty-nine Articles, with "the design of rendering their sense more express and determinate in favour of *Calvinism*."\*

But, though decided and thorough Calvinists, they were strongly opposed to Antinomian tenets, then recently broached in England, against which they openly protested.

As the Assembly were for strengthening the doctrines of the church against *Arminianism*, they were equally solicitous to guard against the opposite extreme of *Antinomianism*; for which purpose they appointed a committee to peruse the writings of *Dr. Crisp, Eaton, Saltmarsh*, and others; who, having drawn out some of their most dangerous positions, reported them to the Assembly, where they were condemned, as well as confuted in their public sermons and writings.

A Confession of Faith, with Scripture proofs, drawn up by several committees, and consisting wholly of Doctrinal articles, was adopted in 1648, with some alterations, by both Houses of Parliament. Other chapters relating to Discipline were afterwards laid aside; and, though found connected with the rest in printed copies, had not the sanction of law in England, which the whole soon obtained in Scotland. "This Confession," says Neal, "with all its faults, has been ranked by very good judges among the most perfect systems of divinity that have been published upon the *Calvinistic* or *Anti-Arminian* principles, in the last age."

"While the *Confession* was carrying through the Assembly, committees were appointed to reduce it into the form of Catechisms; *one larger*, for the service of a public exposition in the pulpit, according to the custom of foreign churches; the *other smaller*, for the instruction of children; in both which, the *articles relating to church discipline* are omitted. The larger catechism is a comprehensive system of divinity; and the smaller, a very accurate summary, though it has been thought by some a little too long, and in some things too abstruse, for

\* Neal's History of the Puritans, vol. iii. p. 68, edit. 1736. The revised Articles may be seen in the Appendix, pp. 555-563. The statements contained in this and the two following pages are derived entirely from Neal, and expressed chiefly in his words.

the capacities of children." The *shorter catechism* was presented to the House of Commons, *November 5, 1647*; the *larger*, with marginal proofs from Scripture, which the Houses desired might be inserted, was allowed to be printed, *by authority*, for public use, *September 15, 1648*.\*

Mr. Baxter speaks of this Assembly in the following terms: 'As far as I am able to judge, by the information of history, and by any other evidences, the christian world, since the days of the apostles, had never a synod of more excellent divines, than this and the Synod of Dort.' They were (adds Neal) in high esteem in the learned world, till they ran into heats, and split upon the fatal rock of the DIVINE RIGHT of the *Presbyterian government*. This engaged them first with the *Parliament*, and then with the *Independents* and *Erastians*. Their opposing a Toleration raised them a great many enemies, and divided their own body.†

A little before his death, in September, 1658, the Independents petitioned Oliver Cromwell for liberty to hold a synod, in order to publish to the world an uniform Confession of their Faith. They were now become a considerable body, their churches being increased, both in city and country, by the addition of great numbers of rich and substantial persons; but they had not agreed upon any standard of faith or discipline. The Presbyterians, in the Assembly of Divines, had urged them to this; and their brethren in New England had done it ten years before. Nor were the English Independents insensible of the defect: 'for hitherto (say they) there have been no association of our churches, no meetings of our ministers, to promote the common interest; our churches are like so many ships, launched singly, and sailing apart and alone in the vast ocean of these tumultuous times, exposed to every wind of doctrine; under no other conduct than the word and Spirit, and their particular elders and principal brethren; without associations among themselves, or so much as holding out a common light to others, whereby to know where they were.' To remedy this, some of their divines and principal brethren in London met together, and proposed that there might be a correspondence among their churches, in city and country,

\* History of the Puritans, vol. iii. pp. 380-382.

† Ibid. p. 493.

for counsel and mutual edification : and forasmuch as all sects and parties of Christians had published a Confession of their Faith, they apprehended the world might reasonably expect it from them. For these reasons, they petitioned the Protector for liberty to assemble for this purpose. This was opposed by some of the court, as tending to establish a separation between them and the Presbyterians ; nor was the Protector himself fond of it : however, he gave way to their importunity.

This Assembly, which consisted of ministers and messengers from above one hundred churches, met at the Savoy, Oct. 12, 1658. "After some debate, whether they should adopt the doctrinal Articles of the Westminster Assembly for their own, with some amendments and additions, it was thought more advisable to draw up a new confession, but to keep as near as possible to the method and order of the other." After deliberating eleven or twelve days, they agreed on a Confession, which was published under the title of "A Declaration of the Faith and Order owned and practised in the Congregational Churches in England," &c.

This Confession proceeds upon the plan of the Westminster Assembly, which made the work very easy ; and, in most places, retains their very words. The compilers mention, in their preface, that they fully consent to the Westminster Confession for the substance of it, but have taken liberty to add a few things, in order to obviate some erroneous opinions that have been more boldly maintained of late than in former times. They have likewise varied the method in some places, and have here and there expressed themselves more clearly. They have omitted all those chapters in the Assembly's Confession which relate to discipline, and some other points, as "doubtful assertions and speculations," most unsuitable to be "placed under so high a title as a Confession of Faith." "But, upon the whole, (adds Mr. Neal,) the difference between these two Confessions, in point of doctrine, is so very small, that the modern Independents have in a manner laid aside the use of it in their families, and agreed with the Presbyterians in the use of the Assembly's Catechism."\*

\* Neal's Hist. Pur. Vol. IV. orig. edit. pub. 1738, pp. 161—164.

“The Savoy Declaration,” says Mr. Orme, in his *Memoirs of Dr. Owen*, “contains the same views of Christian doctrine with the Westminster Confession.” He concludes his account of it in these words—“The Savoy Declaration has never been much known, or generally used, even among Independents. As it was not intended to be a test or bond, and could not be enforced, it has never been regarded as an authority. The principles of the body are adverse to all such views, or uses, of any merely human production. Being substantially the same with the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, which are more easily to be met with, it seems gradually to have given place to them,” pp. 233, 240.

Baxter, who looked with no favourable eye on this Assembly, took a serious objection to one article in their Declaration, which it appears he completely misunderstood. This related to the imputation of the righteousness of Christ for justification, concerning which his views differed from those held by Dr. Owen, who took a leading part in the consultations at the Savoy. Baxter had published, in 1655, a book entitled, “Richard Baxter’s Confession of his Faith, especially concerning the Interest of Repentance and sincere Obedience to CHRIST, in OUR JUSTIFICATION and SALVATION;” 4to. Of this book, the author himself speaks in the following terms—“In my Confession, I opened the whole doctrine of antinomianism which I opposed; and I brought the testimonies of abundance of our divines, who gave as much to other acts besides faith in justification, as I. I opened the weakness of Dr. Owen’s reasonings for justification before faith, in his former answer to me:—to which he wrote an answer, annexing it to his confutation of Biddle and the Cracovian Catechism, to intimate that I belonged to that party; that I thought it unfit to make any reply to it.”\* Some extracts follow:—“I have two sorts of men to address my speech to: 1. Those divines that go the way of the Libertines (commonly called Antinomians) in whole or in part; for these, I perceive, are most deeply offended with me. 2. Some orthodox sober

\* Narrative of his Own Life and Times, folio, 1696. Part I. p. 111.

divines, who are offended with me for some lesser differences wherein I seem to them to affect singularity, and too easily to depart from the common judgment of the reformed churches.

“Were England well rid but of Libertinism, Socinianism, and Popery, it were a happy land.”\*

He tells the reader, “I will make a true confession of my faith, by which you may judge of Mr. *Eyre's* and Mr. *Crandon's* charge of Popery, Socinianism, Arminianism, &c.”†

He then declares his faith in these general terms:—“I do believe the holy canonical scriptures, and all things therein contained, to be infallibly true, as being the word of God: And I do believe it to be a sufficient and perfect rule or law, needing no additions of tradition or human testimony, to supply its defects, though it suppose some tradition and human testimony as necessary to its promulgation and explication.

“Seeing the main point wherein we differ from the Papists, is in maintaining the sufficiency of the scripture, I suppose I need not add any creed or other confession as necessary to be subscribed, as if this word alone were an insufficient test to try by who is orthodox, and of the right religion: so that I think I have in this made a sufficient confession, did not men's misapprehensions require more.”

He then states this objection—“The Socinians and Arminians believe the sufficiency of scripture;” which he thus answers,—“So long there is the more hope of their reduction. But they believe not some plain particular doctrines of scripture. The Socinians believe not the Godhead of Christ, or the Holy Ghost, though the first be oft in terms, and the latter at least in sense, expressed in the scripture. Nor do they believe Christ's satisfaction: therefore they do not believe the doctrine of the scriptures, though they believe in general that the scripture is true.‡

“But because it is expected that there be a more particular profession of the several doctrines contained in this word; and because I confess such a profession very fit and necessary in other respects, (it being not every word in scripture that is of

\* P. 3.

† P. 8.

‡ Pp. 10, 11.



flat necessity to salvation, it is very fit that those which be so, should distinctly and explicitly be believed,) I shall descend to such particulars."

He next recites the short Worcestershire Profession of Faith, then lately published, as expressing in brief the sum of his belief, for assent and consent. The introductory portion of every paragraph will serve as a specimen of the whole.

"I believe that there is one only God, the Father, infinite in being, wisdom, goodness, and power, &c.

"I believe that mankind, being fallen by sin from God and happiness, under the wrath of God, the curse of his law, and the power of the devil, God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son to be their Redeemer, who, being God, and one with the Father, did take to him our nature, and became man, being conceived of the Holy Ghost in the virgin Mary, and born of her, and named Jesus Christ; and, having lived on earth without sin, and wrought many miracles for a witness of his truth, he gave up himself a sacrifice for our sins, and a ransom for us, in suffering death on the cross, &c.

"I believe that God the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of the Father and the Son, was sent from the Father by the Son,\* to inspire and guide the prophets and apostles, that they might fully reveal the doctrine of Christ," &c.

The above he entitles in the margin, "Profession of Assent;" what follows he calls, "Profession of Consent."

"I do heartily take this one God, for my only God and my chief good; and this Jesus Christ for my only Lord, Redeemer, and Saviour; and this Holy Ghost for my Sanctifier, &c.

"I do also take the ten commandments for a general standing rule of obedience; and the Lord's Prayer for a perfect rule for prayer, most admirable for comprehension of matter, and exactness of method," &c.

"This," he adds, "is my religion: this I profess, subscribe, and stand to. He that professeth this, and lives accordingly, shall by me be taken for a good Christian, by what name or title soever men call him. I say as *Hilary, quod non per difficiles quæstiones, ad vitam beatam nos ducat Deus.*†

\* "Or, [and the Son,] which you will." Marg. † Pp. 11—13.

“Thus much might well serve as a discovery of my belief, were it not that prejudice and jealousy require more: I add, therefore,—I do heartily approve of the shorter Catechism of the Assembly, and of all therein contained: and I take it for the best catechism that ever I yet saw, and the answers continued, for a most excellent sum of the Christian faith and doctrine, and a fit test to try the orthodoxness even of teachers themselves.” He then refers to some who would think, that “in embracing this catechism” he was “yet too short to be accounted orthodox,” and “did but embrace a childish faith.” The following extract may suffice, from “those things which (he says) I am bold to tell them by way of answer:”—“2. I would have these men that have such a swelled belief, to compare the Assembly’s shorter catechism, not only with the Epistles which the Apostles wrote to particular churches, but with all the Confessions of faith that were made for four hundred years after Christ, in the church; and see if any of them used a more extensive form? Nay, all the Creeds and Confessions of the church set together for many hundred years (except the scriptures) were not comparable to this, for fulness and exactness of order and expression. Only in the point of the mystery of the Trinity, you may find many more copious and wordy, as urged to it by the several heresies of those times. But whether they are therefore ever the more excellent, I will not presume to censure. Nay, what talk I of creeds and confessions, when you may read many and many volumes of the Fathers that contain not so much of the body of *theology* as this Catechism,” pp. 14, 15.

He afterwards proceeds,—“to give fuller satisfaction, I further add, I have perused the larger Catechism of the Assembly, and judge it a most excellent sum of divinity: and so much the more excellent, in that it is sparing in the difficult and more abstruse part, and most full in the practical part. And I find no word that I dissent from, so I may have leave but to interpret four words as followeth.” p. 18.

These relate chiefly to the exact place and office to be assigned to faith, in justification,—the point on which he differed from the Savoy confession.

In vindicating himself from the charge of taking an occasion to quarrel with the Assembly, he says—"I so highly reverence that Assembly, that I think this nation, since the apostles' days, had never any that excelled it for piety and ability." He then proceeds to express assent to the Confession, with some explications, in these words:—

"I have perused oft the Confession of the Assembly, and verily judge it the most excellent for fulness and exactness that I have ever read from any church. And though the truths therein, being of several degrees of evidence and necessity, I do not hold them with equal clearness, confidence, or certainty; and though some few points in it are beyond my reach; yet I have observed nothing in it contrary to my judgment; if I may be allowed these expositions following."

The first of these relates to passages which speak against universal redemption. "These (he says) I understand not of all redemption, and particularly not of the mere bearing the punishment of man's sins, and satisfying God's justice; but of that special redemption proper to the Elect, which was accompanied with an intention of actual application of the saving benefits in time," p. 21.

On the article—"the Catholike church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be," &c. he says—"I understand it not of the church, as now existent, but as it shall be in its perfection at the end of the world, when all the elect shall be called. I understand those words, *which is invisible*, as distinguishing the church as invisible from the church as visible. For I conceive that Christ hath one universal visible church, called one by the unity of their profession." "And now (he continues) I leave to Mr. Crandon and others to consider, whether a Jesuite, a Papist, a Socinian, an Arminian, will consent to this copious Confession of the Assembly, with these expositions or limitations, as I have here done? Or whether they will make all the Assembly to be Papists, Socinians, or Arminians? I truly profess, I take the labours of the Assembly, especially these three pieces now mentioned, for the best book, next my Bible, in my study; however, the Libertines, and other giddy secta-

ries of these times, have despised them, as if they were childish toys." p. 22.

He next states that he "unfeignedly honours the articles or decrees of the Synod of Dort, as containing sound and moderate doctrine," and heartily laments that some late divines have, to the great detriment of the church and truth, forsaken the moderate way of that synod, and laid the weight of the Anti-Arminian cause so much upon higher points not owned by them. p. 23.

He mentions a few "limiting expositions" with which, he says, "I do profess my consent to the canons or decrees of the Synod of Dort. And how far any of these are from favouring Arminianism, they that will see need not be ignorant. Yea, in the very article of perseverance, which some were pleased to quarrel with me about, I subscribe to the Synod. Yea, in the article of the extent of redemption, wherein I am most suspected and accused, (and was fain to use a limiting exposition in my consent to our Assembly's Confession of faith,) I do subscribe to the Synod of Dort, without any exception, limitation, or exposition, of any word as doubtful, and obscure.\* p. 25.

"And because it is this Synod, purposely called against Arminianism, that is the best discovery what is to be accounted Arminian or Anti-Arminian doctrine, as I think, by consenting to it, I do clear myself from that calumny with all men of conscience and reason that know it; so I shall think that those who go as much on the other hand, and differ from the Synod one way, as much as the Arminians did the other way, remain censurable as well as they; till some body shall convince me that there is but one extream in this case, and that a man may hold what he will without danger, so he be but sure it go far enough from Arminianism. A man that holds to the moderation of the Synod of Dort, need not say that Christ did not dye or satisfie for all men, nor need he trouble himself with presumptuous determinations about many mysteries in the decrees of God, which many volumes are guilty of.

\* "As every man ought to be allowed to be the expositor of his own sentiments, let no man, after this, question or deny the Calvinism of Richard Baxter."—*Life and Times*, by Rev. W. Orme, vol. ii. p. 53.

“ Many other moderate passages I could shew in our Assembly’s Confession, to some that have need to imitate them; and the Antinomians may see their doctrine subverted, in their excellent definition of saving faith, in both Catechisms and in the Confession; in their determination of the natural effects of sin in whomsoever, *ch. 6. sect. 6*; in their determination of the necessity of repentance (as *sine qua non*) to remission, *ch. 15. 3.*; with more the like.

“ And now, if they have any standing rule to know a Papist or Arminian, I think I have acquitted myself from their accusation. But if there be no rule of the Orthodox doctrine and for rejection of Error, but the giddy, distracted brains of Libertines, that know not where to fix themselves, then I am content to bear the name of Jesuit, Papist, or what these men shall please to call me.

“ Yet let me add this, lest my seeking to satisfy the offended may draw me into guilt. Though I have voluntarily myself professed my consent to these several Canons and Confessions of faith, yet for the Synod of Dort, the Confession of our Assembly, yea, or the larger Catechism, without some correction, I do hereby protest my dissent against the so imposing them, to a word, upon all ministers, that no man that cannot subscribe to them shall be permitted in the Church. Whether our Confession were intended for such a necessary Test, I know not well: but that the Synod of Dort was, is expressed in the end. I abhor unlimited liberty of conscience, so called; that is, of divulging intolerable doctrines; and I lament also, that, instead of moderation, the Churches, for 1300 years, have been so guilty of proud and cruel tyranny. There is singular use for a full body of Theologie, or a Profession concluded on by such reverend assemblies, that the younger ministers may be taught by it, and the reverence of it may restrain them from rashly contradicting it. And there is a necessity of exercising power in ministerial assemblies, for the actual restraint of such as shall teach things intolerably unsound; and all ministers should be there accountable for their doctrine. But before any Forms be tendered us to subscribe, we must have them reduced into a narrower room, and

into phrase so clearly rational or scriptural, as no sober, studious, competent, godly divine, shall scruple. Call it Socinian, or what name soever imperious faction shall put upon it, yet tender consciences will expect this, and the Churches shall never have peace in any other way, unless I be a false prophet; and the contrary course doth but tend to do the same in doctrine, as the Common Prayer Book did in worship; even to ensnare the most conscientious, and work them out of the ministry by degrees, and to create us, insensibly, a lazy, formal ministry, that will take all upon trust, and run to the authority of their Confession instead of their Bible. I have long feared that the toleration threatened in these times, for all, is a judgment of God, for our running into the tyrannical extreme so long; and I withal hope that he will turn this judgment to a mercy.”\*

The latter part of this extract will furnish the reader with a clue to the real sentiments of Baxter. They were moderate, catholic, but not latitudinarian; favourable to what he regarded as reasonable liberty, and opposed to rigorous imposition, but equally opposed to unlimited license. I shall subjoin a few extracts from the doctrinal propositions which follow.

“Though faith in Christ be a fruit of God’s eternal election, and of Christ’s meritorious redemption, and of the Holy Ghost’s effectual special saving operation; yet it is man’s act and habit, and by the precept made his duty,” &c.† Speaking of the objects of faith, he mentions as the principal: “1. Christ himself; and that considered in his nature as God and as man, and in his office as mediator, and so as king, priest, prophet; and in the exercise of these, as one that hath been born, lived perfectly, died innocently, satisfied, risen again, and is now ascended, and in glory, reigning and interceding. 2. The end of his redemption, viz. our final blessedness in the unseen glory, and our pardon and sanctification as the way and beginning.”‡

“This faith, by which we are justified and saved, is the receiving of Jesus Christ as Jesus Christ, and as a Saviour entirely; and as a physician of our souls, to cure us of, and

\* Pp. 25—27.

† P. 33.

‡ P. 34.

save us from both guilt and power of sin, and the misery due for it. And so it is the receiving of Christ, as a prophet to teach us, and a king to rule us, and a priest after the order of *Melchisedeck*, now to intercede for us, and not only as a sacrifice for our sins, or a satisfier of justice for us. It is the receiving of whole Christ,"\* (he afterwards explains this expression, by "receiving him in all those respects which are essential to him, as he is Redeemer and Saviour.")†

"Christ himself, as mediator and redeemer, in satisfying and procuring pardon, is a remedy, a means to our recovery, a way to the Father, &c. It is one end of his bloodshed and redemption, to procure us the Spirit, and restore us to a state of holiness, and to 'purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,' Tit. ii. 14; and to wash us and cleanse us, that he may present us pure and acceptable to his Father, without spot or wrinkle, Eph. v. 26, 27.‡

"Our remission of sin is only for the merit of Christ, and in his blood: and I give not faith, or any act of man, the least copartnership with Christ's righteousness, nor any share in this honour. Now seeing our divines do commonly mean *the remission of sin, and the accepting us as pardoned*, when they speak of justification; and all this I ascribe to Christ's meritorious satisfactory righteousness alone, and not at all to faith or works as any causes, I conceive I grant them the thing that they contend for."§

The reader should be informed, that the author's design was to vindicate himself from the charge of "teaching *an almost pure Socinian Justification*,"|| which he had himself, a few years before, called, "most accursed doctrine."¶

Here, at least, is no indication of the "latitudinarian spirit" which Mr. Hunter ascribes to the Presbyterian body at a later period, or of that characteristic of it which he mentions as "the setting works before faith."\*\* Baxter, on the contrary, regarded faith as, in its own nature, a comprehensive grace, as

\* P. 35.

† P. 90.

‡ P. 43.

§ P. 52.

|| P. 57.

¶ "Aphorismes of Justification, with their Explication annexed," 12mo. 1649, p. 307.

\*\* Hist. Def. p. 42.

well as the great principle of Christian virtue. He strongly objected to confining it to any one act, and describes it as “the full, sincere reception of Christ as our Saviour, in all the essential parts of his office;—by all those acts of the soul, which are of absolute necessity to the true reception of such an object: that is, by assent, consent, love to him, affiance.”\*

Noticing the opinion held by some writers, who represent “apprehension of Christ” as justifying faith, he says—“Passing by the ambiguity and comprehensiveness of the term *apprehension*, no man can tell us whether to apprehend Christ as God and as man, and as God and man in one person, and as the second person in [the] Trinity, and as one that hath died, and by death satisfied, and as one that is risen, ascended, intercedeth, hath power to forgive sins, and as one that, by pardoning, must save us from hell, and give us heaven, &c.; I say no man can tell just how many physical acts go to this: much less can any prove that all this may be done by one physical act, or can any cull out any one, and say, that is the justifying object and act, and reject all the rest as not essentially requisite as well as that.”† He subsequently declares—

“I do firmly believe, that he that receives not Jesus Christ, as Jesus Christ—that is, as God and man, as one that hath perfectly obeyed, died for us, ransomed us, rose again, is now in glory, Lord of all, as our Saviour from the guilt and power of sin, and so as Priest, Prophet, and King, as one that will bring us to glory, if we believe; and so as a benefactor, and as good, (and therefore to be received with gratitude and love,)—I say, he that doth not thus receive Christ is not a true Christian, nor hath any true justifying faith, but shall be damned; and that justifying faith containeth all this in it. And therefore I believe, that they who teach men that some one only of these acts is justifying faith, and all the rest are works, which, if we look for salvation or justification by, we fall from Christ, do lead men the direct way to desperation and damnation.”‡

After the strong language just quoted, I may introduce to

\* Pp. 35, 90.

† P. 91.

‡ P. 93.



the notice of the reader what is represented as the great distinguishing principle of those called Presbyterians, of whom Baxter may be almost regarded as the head and father. They might, it is said, be themselves, as he was, moderately orthodox; but they were no zealots for their private opinions. On the contrary, so firmly did they resist "the principle of subscription," so strenuously did they oppose the imposition of a creed, so jealous were they of all articles of faith expressed in mere human words and phrases, which might by possibility be converted into a test or criterion of orthodoxy, that they would tolerate *any* doctrine, however erroneous, and even heretical, in their judgment it might be, rather than afford the least countenance to what might operate in the slightest degree as a limitation or restraint on the exercise of the right of private judgment by "imposing any fetters on the freedom of inquiry." Mr. Hunter, referring to the early part of the eighteenth century, thus describes the principle to which I have just adverted:—

"I do not mean to say, that the opinion of the Presbyterian body at large, did not agree very much with the moderate orthodoxy of Baxter, or that there was any concealment of opinion to any considerable extent. But I do mean to say, that there existed in the Presbyterian body, at that time, a latitudinarian spirit which is inconsistent with the possession of zeal for any particular modification of Christian belief."\* Again: "Neither is there any reason to believe, that the zeal for what are called orthodox opinions, which is founded on the principle that a peculiar faith is essential to salvation, actuated the minds of the Presbyterian founders:"† but the reader has been informed what was that 'peculiar faith' which Baxter considered 'essentially requisite' to justification, and consequently to salvation and eternal life.

It may be said the extracts I have given are from a work published before the Restoration. In reply to such an objection, I might say, he never revoked the opinions there expressed, and no evidence can be produced to shew that he did not continue to hold them. But without referring to numerous

\* Historical Defence, pp. 41, 42.

† Ib. p. 33.

similar passages in his later writings, it may be mentioned, that in a book, published in 1681,\* he refers to this "Confession," as containing a view of his "Religion."

The English Presbyterian Association make a just distinction between "*imposing* and *declaring* opinions;"† but they positively affirm that the Presbyterians of this period "always disclaimed any fixed standard of orthodoxy, sought the abolition of distinctive creeds; and did not attempt permanently to define the doctrines they professed."‡ It is not easy to see how they could *profess* certain doctrines, unless those doctrines were not only expressed in words, but also committed to writing, and stamped with perpetuity by means of the press; and what else is it permanently to define them? That, indeed, had been already done by the Westminster Assembly; but let this writer shew that their successors, during the period in question, rescinded or revoked that act of the original English Presbyterians. But they elsewhere seem to concede the point in debate; for they not only speak of "the doctrines their predecessors professed,"§ but, in a subsequent page, describe the Presbyterians as "a body of men, who, since their secession from the Church, have relinquished *their own original standard of faith*, as well as the institutions from which they derive their name."|| True, the modern successors of this body have relinquished their original standard—the standard adopted by the founders of the Presbyterian churches—but, during the period in question, and for many years after,¶ they adhered to the same standard, and generally believed the doctrines which it contained.

\* "An Apology for the Nonconformists' Ministry," 4to. "I have told you my religion oft enough, especially in my '*Reasons for the Christian Religion*,' and in my '*Confession*.'" p. 118. The other work relates chiefly to the evidence by which Christianity is supported.

† Hist. p. 3.      ‡ Ib. pp. 33, 49, 63.      § Ib. p. 28.      || Ib. p. 99.

¶ Even so late as 1747, the Dissenters *professed* adherence to these original standards, as the following quotation from a book published by Dr. Watts in that year, will shew:—

"Such articles or summaries of the Christian religion are useful to hold forth to the world, what are in general the sentiments of such a particular Church or

The following are a few of the strong assertions made by the English Presbyterian Association concerning the alleged difference on this point between the two bodies:—

“The Independents have ever been opposed to the Presbyterians as to the principle of imposing any fetters on the freedom of inquiry. The modern Presbyterians have acted on the liberal principle handed down to them; the Independents fence their faith by creeds and subscriptions.”\* “The governing principle of the Presbyterians was to leave that liberty to others, which they claimed for themselves; to look to Scripture as the sole rule of faith; to admit to its full extent the right of private judgment; and virtually to admit the innocence of involuntary error. Their principle was not to interfere with doctrines; to allow all to act upon their own responsibility in receiving or rejecting any religious opinions; and not to censure any for acting in the honest exercise of their judgment.”†

“They did not compose a creed, and require subscription to it, but rejected the imposition of all statements, positive in their terms, respecting disputed doctrines.”‡ “We do happen to know that their opinions were latitudinarian, and there is abundant evidence in existence to shew their indifference to religious doctrine.”§ In support of this assertion no testimony is here produced from any Presbyterian writer, but merely an extract from a treatise by Dr. Hare, a bishop of the Church of England.

I have admitted, that, even prior to the Restoration, the Presbyterians had no creed which they used as a *test* to which

*Churches*; and as this is proper on many accounts, so it is of use in order to make the way to their communion evident and easy, and that other Christians may know whether they agree with them in what is essential to Christianity, and may judge, whether they should seek or desire constant or occasional communion with them; and that other Churches may judge, whether they should admit their members to communion. This also may tend to encourage more zealous and hearty consultations, and mutual assistances toward the support of their common Christianity, provided that these articles are drawn up with judgment, and these things are managed with prudence and charity. Such are, or should be, the *Articles of the Church of England*, which proclaim her doctrine and discipline to the world. Such are, or should be, the *Westminster Assembly's Confession of Faith*, or that of the *Savoy*, and the two *Catechisms* which shew the faith and worship of the *English Dissenters*.”—*Rational Foundation of a Christian Church*, pp. 198, 199.

\* Hist. p. 3.    † Ib. pp. 50, 51.    ‡ Ib. pp. 53, 55.    § Ib. 57, 58.

they required *subscription*, or which they imposed upon others as a term of communion; though it appears that Baxter, at least, considered what is called the Apostles' creed, as a form of words to which a profession of assent and consent might be required. But it does not follow that they abjured, for *all purposes*, the use of articles and confessions, because they did not impose them as tests. They might distinguish between the use and the abuse of such documents. Without requiring "implicit assent" to them, they might choose to employ them for legitimate purposes. Accordingly, we find that such was the fact. They were never reluctant to state, for the information of others, what were their real opinions on doctrinal points; nor did they shrink, through any fear of consequences, from making a public declaration of "those things which were most surely believed among them."\* There is an obvious difference between professing to hold certain doctrines, and requiring subscription to the document, whether called a creed or a confession, in which those doctrines are expressed and embodied; still more between professing, and imposing or enforcing upon others by penalties, the profession of belief in them. The question, "shall there be a creed imposed or not?" was well known; (say the English Presbyterian Association;) it had been argued, and its determination formed a badge of distinction."† This question, "shall there be a creed imposed or not?" was one to which Independents, as well as Presbyterians, have always returned a negative reply. Neither of them ever required "assent to the imposition of a creed."‡ If the former imposed a creed, surely a fact which must have been notorious will admit of being proved. The document (if any) must be still in existence. Let it be produced, or a reference made to the historical record in which it may be found. The Savoy Confession, to which we may perhaps be referred, was neither originally intended, nor was it at any time actually used, as a test of orthodoxy, or a standard of appeal in the

\* For some just and forcible remarks on this point, I beg leave to refer the reader to a learned and eloquent "Letter to the Rev. James Yates, M.A.," &c. by the Rev. Robert Halley, Classical Tutor of Highbury College, p. 67.

† Hist. p. 50.

‡ Ib. p. 46.

room of the scriptures, which both parties regarded as the sole rule of faith. Indeed the Independents, as already intimated, made little use of that Confession for any purpose, but for many years adopted the Assembly's shorter catechism as their symbol.

"The Independents <sup>see also title</sup> (~~says Mr. Hunter~~) adhere ostensibly to similar views as to discipline, and the propriety of subscriptions and confessions now as during the period in question." With respect to "the propriety of subscriptions," if by that is meant the imposing of subscription to human articles, the statement is incorrect, both in reference to the Independents of earlier and of modern times. They did not formerly, any more than the Presbyterians, nor do they now, require "implicit assent to creeds, liturgies, or articles." On the contrary, they disapprove, and, on principle, disavow any such requirement. The fact is, that both parties were equally, and on the same grounds, opposed to the *imposition* of creeds, or the demand of subscription to articles of faith expressed in merely human terms.\*

The Presbyterians, especially those of London and Lancashire, were chiefly instrumental in accomplishing the restoration of monarchy in the person of Charles the Second. Most cruel and ungrateful was the treatment they received at the hands of that perfidious and dissolute prince. They were willing to enter into terms with the Episcopalians for a mutual accommodation of ecclesiastical differences, and a meeting was held at the Savoy, professedly for that purpose. They offered to concur in a modified system of Episcopacy, and to adopt a revised liturgy. This proves that their altered circumstances had rendered them more liberal in reference to particular modes of church government. They generally approved of a national established church, and therein certainly at that time differed from the Independents. But the entertaining of

\* For particular information on the sentiments of the Independents concerning public confessions of faith by bodies of professed Christians, the reader is referred to Orme's *Memoirs of Dr. Owen*, pp. 227—229; the *History of Dissenters*, by Messrs. Bogue and Bennet, orig. edit. vol. i. p. 298; and to the Preliminary Notes prefixed to the Declaration of Faith, Church Order, and Discipline, adopted by the Congregational Union of England and Wales, in 1833—p. 4.

that opinion had not the effect upon their minds, ascribed to it by the English Presbyterian Association, of making them indifferent to doctrinal truth. The writer asserts, that at this era a remarkable change took place in the views of the two bodies; that "doctrinal severity" now began to characterize the Independents, while "moderation and liberality of sentiment" gradually spread and prevailed among the Presbyterian body of Nonconformists, in the interval between the Restoration and the Toleration Act.\*

If any change of this kind took place among the Independents, let the evidence be produced. It will be easy to shew, that, neither in respect to discipline nor doctrine, did any relaxation, to the extent here insinuated, occur in the views and sentiments of the Presbyterians.

Shortly after the Restoration, several eminent Presbyterian ministers, having been made chaplains to the king, recommended to his serious consideration the union of his subjects in religion, by an accommodation of differences, begging that only things necessary might be the terms of union; that the true exercise of church discipline might be allowed; and that the faithful ministers that would exercise it might not be cast out, nor unworthy men obtruded on the people. A paper of proposals was afterwards drawn up, addressed to his majesty, in which the ministers, who then met daily at Sion College, chiefly Presbyterians, humbly present four preliminary requests: *That serious godliness might be countenanced; that a learned and pious minister in each parish might be encouraged; that a personal public owning of the baptismal covenant might precede an admission to the Lord's table; and that the Lord's-day might be strictly sanctified.*†

In October, 1660, a declaration from his majesty, concerning ecclesiastical affairs, was prepared, and a meeting of Episcopal dignitaries and divines, with the leading Presbyterian ministers, called to hear it read, and offer their objections to what either side disliked. After it had been perused and discussed, the lord chancellor intimated that the king had also been petitioned by the *Independents* and *Anabaptists* for liberty; and read an additional clause, to the effect that,

\* Hist. p. 13.

† Calamy's Abridgment of Baxter's Life, pp. 139—141

*others also be permitted to meet for religious worship, so be it they do it not to the disturbance of the peace; and that no justice of peace or officer disturb them.* This being designed to secure liberty to the *Papists*, there was a general silence upon the reading of it. The bishops thought it a nice point, and therefore said nothing: the *Presbyterians* were afraid to speak against it, lest all the sects and parties should look upon them as the causers of their sufferings, and they should be represented as grossly partial, in desiring liberty themselves, while they would have no others obtain it with them. At length, Mr. Baxter, fearing their silence might be misinterpreted, spake to this purpose, *That Dr. Gunning, a little before speaking against sects, had named the Papists and Socinians; that, for their parts, they did not desire favour to themselves alone, and rigorous severity against none; but, as they humbly thanked his majesty for his declared Indulgence to themselves, so they distinguished the tolerable party from the intolerable. For the former, they humbly craved just lenity and favour; but for the latter, such as the two sorts mentioned, for their parts, they could not make THEIR Toleration their request.\**

I do not deny that there was a considerable increase of liberality among the Presbyterian divines after the Restoration, and that they adopted more enlarged views of religious liberty. But that there was not any considerable or serious degree of “doctrinal relaxation,” is evident from the fact, that they still adhered to the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of their Assembly, and professed the doctrines contained in them. The Shorter Catechism was in general use among them; and several expositions of it were, in the course of a few years, published by eminent ministers belonging to their body.

After informing us that the Presbyterians, among the ejected ministers, were at first favourable to a national establishment of Christianity, if that establishment could have been settled in a form which appeared to them scriptural, and certain impositions removed,—Mr. Hunter proceeds to remark, “But

\* Calamy's Abridgment, pp. 149, 150.

being out of the Church, and persecuted by the state which supported the Church, in the interval between the passing of the Acts of Uniformity and Toleration, some change in this respect may well be supposed to have taken place; and they who in the unsettled times would have erected guards, such as it seems there must be if a national church is to be maintained at all, were now become the advocates of a most unlimited toleration, as they necessarily must have become, since in no other way could their own opposition to the church and to the law have been justified. Here they took a lesson from the Independents, and this same principle has remained with them.”\*

Baxter justly remarks—“All are for toleration (usually) that need it.” The Presbyterians became, after the passing of the Act of Uniformity, vigorous opponents of unnecessary impositions, and advocates for liberty of conscience, but only within certain prescribed bounds.

Baxter, who for many years acted as their leading divine in all public matters, and who was certainly one of the most liberal of them, many years after the Act of Uniformity, expressed his opinion in these strong terms—“But I still say, that *toleration* must have its due bounds, and not extend to intolerable doctrines, practices, or persons.”

During the treaty for union, held in 1675, with a few leading Presbyterian divines, a paper was drawn up, probably by Baxter, entitled “An Act for the Healing and Concord of his Majesty’s Subjects in matters of Religion,” which contains the following clause:—

“VI. And whereas there are many peaceable subjects, who hold all the essentials of the Christian Faith, but conform not to so much as is required to the Established Ministry and Church-Communion, Be it enacted, that all and only they who shall publicly take the oaths of *allegiance* and *supremacy* before some court of justice, &c.; and that then and there subscribe as followeth, [ I A. B. *do unfeignedly stand to my baptismal covenant, and do believe all the articles of the Creeds called the Apostles, Nicene, and Constantinopolitane;*

\* Hist Def. p. 16.



*and the truth of the Holy Canonical Scriptures, and do renounce all that is contrary thereto,]* shall be so far tolerated in the exercise of their religion, as his Majesty, with the advice of his parliament or council, shall from time to time find consistent with the peace and safety of his kingdoms.”\*

Dr. Stillingfleet, in his celebrated sermon before the Lord Mayor against Nonconformists, May 2, 1680, had asserted—“Those that now plead for Toleration did once think it the mother of confusion, the nurse of atheism,” &c. To which Baxter, in his answer to that sermon, thus replies—

“Ans. 1. Sure, though you often cite Dr. *Owen*, you mean not the Independents.

2. If they spake either for or against Toleration, as you do without distinction, and were *for all* or *against all*, and distinguished not the *tolerable* from the *intolerable*, it’s no great heed to be taken what they say. If there were but one false word imposed on you, which you could not assent to, and on 2000 such as you, should *you* be no more tolerated than a *Mahometan*?”†

In a preceding page, in reply to what Dr. Stillingfleet had said concerning the Assembly of Divines urging conformity on their Dissenting brethren, he says—

“But is it possible that you can expect that men should believe that *their case* and *ours* are the same, or that either *all* must be tolerated or *none*, that conform not; and that the bare talking for or against toleration, without distinguishing the tolerable from the intolerable, doth tend to men’s edification. He that will tolerate all, is bad; and he that will tolerate none that differ, is mad. As it’s an ill argument, *Vespæ habent favos, et apes habent favos; Ergo vespæ sunt apes*: so it is not a good one to say, *Wasps’ nests should be destroyed*; ergo, *Bee-hives* should be destroyed.

“The Assembly urged the Independents to declare but what limits they would allow to their church-gathering liberty; that it might not extend to Hereticks and the intolerable, and could not prevail. Judge now, whether these cases are of any

\* Narrative of Life, part iii. p. 159.

† P. 98.

kin? Save in the *genus* of not allowing unlimited toleration, which we hold to as well as they.”\*

“What a pitiful case is mankind in, if such an harangue of confounding words can make them believe that tolerating or not tolerating, in causes vastly different, are the same! Is it all one to deny men liberty to seduce others from the essentials of the faith, and to forbid many hundreds to preach Christ’s Gospel, unless they will openly profess that they assent and consent to three books, and covenant never to endeavour the reforming of the government of the church?”† &c.

In the same year, Baxter published, “The True and Only Way of Concord of all the Christian Churches: the desirableness of it, and the detection of false dividing Terms,” 12mo. He declares himself in favour of the magistrate’s right to repress the propagation of false doctrine by authority of law. “The errors which men should be restrained from preaching or propagating,” he says, “are innumerable;” and proceeds to mention a great variety of false and dangerous doctrines, of which the following may serve as a specimen:—

“Of the BLESSED DIVINE TRINITY.

“2. That the Trinity are but three names of God; or three relations of him to the creature.

“5. That one Person in the Trinity is, in time or dignity, before or after other, or greater or less than other.

“7. That the doctrine of the Trinity is contradictory, or impossible to be true.

“8. That it is unnecessary to be believed or preached.

“10. That the works of Creation, Redemption, or Sanctification, are no more eminently or otherwise ascribed in Scripture to any one Person in the Trinity than to the other. That Creation is no otherwise ascribed to the Father than to the Son and Holy Ghost; nor Redemption to the Son than to the Father and the Holy Ghost; nor Sanctification, Consolation, and Sealing, to the Holy Ghost, than to the Father and the Son; and so that they are not hence relatively distinguishable to us, and by us, at all.

“Of the PERSON OF CHRIST.

“1. That Christ is but a creature, or not eternal; or not of the same Divine Essence as is the Father.

“9. That he had not two distinguishable natures, viz. the Divine and Human.

“16. That Christ is not now God and man in Heaven.

\* Pp. 90, 91.

† P. 104.

“ OF the HOLY GHOST and the HOLY SCRIPTURES.

“ 1. That the Holy Ghost is but a creature, or not God, of the same essence with the Father and the Son.

“ OF SIN, Original and subsequent.

“ 7. That Infants have no Original Sin ; no guilt of Adam’s sin, and no sinful pravity of nature.

“ 9. That therefore Infants have no need of a Saviour to suffer for their sin, nor of a pardon.

“ 10. That Infants need not the Holy Ghost to sanctifie them, by killing any sinful pravity or inclination in them.

“ 12 That sin deserveth not hell, or an everlasting punishment.

“ OF REDEMPTION BY CHRIST INCARNATE, &c.

“ 6. That Christ was not a satisfying sacrifice for Sin.

“ 11. That Christ’s Rightousness and sacrifice are not the true meritorious cause of our righteousness, pardon, justification, and salvation.

“ 20. That Christ sendeth not forth his Spirit to be his agent and witness to the end of the world, in sanctifying his elect.

“ OF FAITH, REPENTANCE, and SANCTIFICATION.

“ 5. That Faith and Repentance are of nature, or by mere natural power and free will, and not the gift of grace through Christ.

“ 6. That God giveth grace equally to all, till good improvers make a difference.

“ 7. That men may be holy in the restored image of God without the grace of the Holy Ghost.

“ OF the CHURCH.

“ 21. That the universal Church hath erred, or may err, in points essential to Christianity, or absolutely necessary to salvation ; (and so become no Church, and Christ no King or Head of it.)

“ 25. That a member of the visible Church cannot be certainly known, because it cannot be known what is essential to a Christian, seeing it depends on the sufficiency of the proposal of truths, which cannot be known by many or most.\*

The reader must now perceive how widely remote from truth is the statement, that “ the object of Baxter and the succeeding Presbyterians was to maintain concord, by laying the foundation of an institution wide enough to include all classes of opinions.” †

There was another point of difference between Presbyterians and Independents, on which great stress has been laid by these writers, and which will therefore require particular examination. It relates to the qualifications required from candidates for admission to the Lord’s supper, the exercise of discipline, and the terms of church communion generally.

\* Pp. 293-317.

† Hist. p. 141.

In describing what they consider as "the great practical distinction between the Presbyterians and the Independents," the English Presbyterian Association mention, not only "the rejection, by the former, of creeds and subscriptions," but also "the practice of admitting communicants to the Lord's table without any of those inquiries, examinations, and confessions, on which others insisted. The Presbyterians (they add) opposed all interference with the liberty of conscience, every inquisitorial process, and all compilations of creeds."\*

Speaking afterwards of the Independents, they say, "By practice, the members of their congregations are called upon to make confessions of faith, and to express a determination to adhere to them. The difference, in the whole course and practice of the two parties, indicates a distinguishing principle. There was nothing to prevent the limitations required by the one from being required by the other, or the confessions of doctrines demanded by the one from being demanded by the other."†

The Presbyterians, according to Mr. Hunter, extended their communion to all, whereas the Independents "fenced round the Lord's table with the requirement of previous confessions and histories of experiences and professions of belief." In this respect he represents them as "unlike the Presbyterians, whose principle of a national church necessarily led to open communion."‡

That the Presbyterians approved of such a national church as in their opinion would necessarily lead to open communion, cannot be correct, because one of their chief objections to the English diocesan frame of Episcopacy established by the Act of Uniformity, was, that "it deposed church discipline, and rendered it impossible." I admit that it was the general custom of Independent churches, at this time, to require from candidates for admission, besides a confession of faith, a statement of their religious experience, either orally delivered or committed to writing; which was not common among Presbyterians. These did, however, require previous professions of belief; and, though not by means of "any

\* Hist. p. 18.

† Ib. p. 50.

‡ Hist. Def. pp. 16.

inquisitorial process," (which no English nonconformists have *ever* used,) they certainly did make "examinations," if they did not also institute particular inquiries respecting those who proposed themselves for communion.

Baxter thus expresses his opinions concerning this point—

"All Christians are agreed that it belongeth to God only to make the conditions of church communion; and therefore it belongeth not to us to invent them, nor to our wit to censure what God hath done, but to search the Scripture till we find it out, and then obey it. This is the great controversie which hath troubled the church. When men know not who should be members of the church, and who not, and when they have no certain rule or character to know whom they must receive, it is no wonder if confusion and contention be the complexion and practice of such churches. And here the pastors have torn the church by running into contrary extreams. Some have thought that the visible church must be constituted only of such persons as satisfie the pastors and the people of the truth of their sanetification by some special account of their conversion, or the work of grace upon their hearts, in a distincter manner than the ancient church required of the baptized.

"On the other side, there is one or two of late among us, who think that the church is but *Christ's school*, where he *teacheth the way* to true regeneration, and not a *society of professed and regenerate ones or saints*: and that all who own Christ as the *Teacher* of the church, and submit to the *government of the pastors*, and are willing to learn how to be regenerate, should be baptized, though they profess not any *special saving faith of repentance*.

"What church soever is constituted according to either of these *two opinions*, will not be constituted according to the mind of Christ; but yet with this difference. The first opinion introduceth church *tyranny* and *injustice*, and is founded in the want of Christian *charity* and *knowledge*, and tendeth to endless separation and confusion. But the second opinion inferreth all these greater mischiefs. First. It confoundeth the *Catechumens* with the *Christians*, and maketh all *Christians* who are but willing to learn to be Christians. Secondly, it maketh the Christian church to consist of such as are *no Christians*; as that person certainly is not, who consenteth not that Christ be his Teacher, Priest, and King: for to such an one, he is *no Christ*; seeing these are the essential parts of his *mediatory office*. And the new device of distinguishing *Christ's apostolike and mediatory offices*, and so the church *congregate* and the church *regenerate* accordingly, will not serve to defend this conceit. For, as Christ, is not *divided*, so his office for which he is called *Christ*, is but *one*, which entirely is called the office of a *Saviour*, or *Redeemer*, or *Mediator*, which are all one: and the

essential parts of it are, first, his priestly; second, teaching and ruling offices or works. And this which is called his *teaching* or *prophetic office*, is a part of his *mediatory* or *saving office*. And he is no *Christian*, nor is that any *congregated Christian church*, which professeth not to take Christ for his *Mediator*, his *Priest*, and *King*, as well as for an *Apostle*, a *Prophet*, or *Teacher*. Thirdly, they therefore who hold the aforesaid doctrine, do introduce a new sort of Christianity. Fourthly, and a new sort of baptism, which the church of Christ never knew to this day. Fifthly, And by this new doctrine, they destroy all that *special love* which church members, or visible Christians, as such, should bear to one another. For if no *faith* or *consent* must necessarily be professed at baptism but that which is *common* to the *ungodly* and children of the devil, then *all church members*, as *only such*, must be taken to be but *ungodly*; and no man must love a church member as such, with a *special love*, as a visible saint; but only as one of the hopefuller sort of the *ungodly*. Sixthly, And hence it will follow, that either *none* must make *any profession of saving faith and repentance*, (and so all appearance of holiness must be driven out of the world,) or else the church must be constituted of two sorts of professions and professors, *tota specie* distinct from one another; yea, more distinct than infidels are from their new sort of Christians. And consequently it must needs be indeed *two churches*, and not one; viz. *one church* of those who take Christ for their *teacher only*, and another of those that take him *entirely as Christ*. Seventhly, And by this rule, the *Socinians* and *Mahometans*, who confess Christ to be a *great Teacher*, but deny him to be the *Priest* and *Sacrifice* for sin, may be *baptized*, and taken for *Christians*.”\*

He thus explains the nature of the baptismal covenant:—

“The true conditions of admittance into the church and state of Christianity are these:

“First—*A true belief in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and a devoting ourselves sincerely to him, as our reconciled Father, our Saviour, and our Sanctifier, in a resolved covenant or consent, renouncing the devil, the world, and the flesh*, (expressly or impliedly,) is the whole and the only condition of our communion with the Church mystical, or the living body of Christ. This (he adds) is to be a Christian.

“Secondly—*That which maketh a man a member of the Universal Church, as visible, is his baptism; which is his profession of the same true faith aforesaid, and consent to the covenant; or his visible dedication to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as his reconciled Father, his Saviour, and Sanctifier, by a vow and covenant in baptism*, pp. 50, 51.

“And here” (he adds) “I must lament it, that I have met with many censorious professors, who would not communicate with the parish churches, because the *people are ignorant*, who, when I have

\* Cure of Church Divisions, 3d edit. 12mo. 1670, pp. 45—48.

examined *themselves*, have proved ignorant of the *very substance of Christianity*, so that I have been much in doubt whether I ought to admit them to the Lord's table or not. They knew not whether Christ was *Eternal*, or whether he was *God when he was on earth*, or whether he be *man now he is heaven*: nor what *faith* is, or what *justification* or *sanctification* is; nor what the *covenant* of grace is; nor what *baptism* or the *Lord's Supper* are; nor could prove the Scripture to be the word of God; or prove man's soul to be immortal; but gave false or impertinent answers about all these." p. 55.

Thus it appears, that, liberal as were Baxter's views concerning the terms of church communion, he required not a little theological knowledge from those who offered themselves for admission, besides a profession of what he regarded as the essential articles of the Christian faith, and entered into particular examinations, in order to ascertain whether they possessed the requisite degree of information. In short, though an earnest advocate for catholic and comprehensive church communion, founded on the basis of a solemn profession of Christianity, Baxter, it is evident, held a belief of the Trinity necessary to constitute a true Christian.

He proceeds to state, that an intelligent, voluntary, deliberate profession of faith in, and consent to the whole baptismal covenant, is the profession of Christianity which entitleth those baptized during infancy, on attaining years of discretion, to church communion; "unless they forfeit the credit of their profession, by proved heresies, or crimes in which they live impenitently: and the more solemnly this is done, the better it is. Whosoever doth *profess the Baptismal Covenant*, professeth to be a *saint*. Conversion, regeneration, faith, and repentance, are all contained in *taking God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for our Father, Saviour, and Sanctifier*." In reply to the objection, that a parrot may be taught to speak those words, he says: "It's true; and perhaps to speak any words which you use yourselves; but if you will thence conclude that words must not be taken as a *profession*, you grossly err, or abusively wrangle."\* He carefully distinguishes between "articles of faith," or truths essential to Christianity, the belief of which was therefore necessary to salvation, and lesser

\* Cure of Ch. Div. pp. 52—55.

truths. Heretics, in the strict sense of the word, he describes as persons denying any one essential part of the Christian doctrine. The essentials of the Christian faith, expressed in the "three articles" of the baptismal covenant, he considered to have been afterwards embodied in what is called "the Apostles' Creed;" which, it is evident, he regarded as a profession of faith in the Trinity, or in God, as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Sincere consent he represents as full saving conversion; but, he adds, "it is not that covenant when any *essential part* is omitted. To believe in the *Father*, and not the *Son*, or not in the *Holy Ghost*, is not that covenant."\* In his "True and Only Way of Concord," he says, "The Council of Nice truly decided, 'All that had not true Christian baptism, consisting of all the true essentials, were to be re-baptized, and not others, whatever particular church they were of.' If the person baptized profess to be baptized in general, but deny any *Essential* in particular, it is not the true Christian baptism, but must be better done. When any came in so great error, as that the Church scarce knew whether it was an Essential part of faith and baptism that was denied, it made the controversie hard about their re-baptizing. Many thought that the *Photinians* and *Arians*, denying Christ's Godhead as of the same substance with the Father, denied an essential article, and were to be re-baptized if they so entered at first. Our *Socinians* are much worse, that deny Christ's Godhead in a fuller sense. And how doth he believe in Christ, that believeth him not to be God, which is most eminently essential to him? pp. 116, 117.

"And to take into the church of Christ such as want the Essentials, and Christ would not have received, is to corrupt his church, and bring in confusion, and such as will dishonour him, and will be more hurtful in the church than they would be without; like rebels in a kingdom, or mutineers in an army, or enemies in a family—the nearer the worse.

"How far infidels, catechumens, or heretical or schismatical assemblies, may be tolerated in the world about us by magistrates, is not here to be enquired. But that the churches

\* Defence of Nonconformists' Plea for Peace, 12mo. 1630, p. 148.



themselves should not corrupt their own communion, by taking and keeping in uncapable persons, the nature of the church and discipline, and its ends, and the reproof of the churches (Rev. ii. & iii.) and the judgment of the universal church, do tell us." p. 118.

I will only add one brief but decisive testimony, alone sufficient to shew that Baxter was not an advocate for open, in the sense of indiscriminate, communion.

"We [Nonconformists] judge all our present Infidels, *Saducees*, and *Socinians*, unfit, [to receive the Lord's Supper,] if not the Papists."\*

Baxter considered it an important part of the minister's office to execute the discipline prescribed and appointed in the New Testament, in order to keep the church pure, and separate from the world. The discipline which he approved might be, and probably was, less strict than that exercised by the Independents, though he has recorded, to their honour, that "he saw a commendable care of serious holiness and discipline in most of their churches."† On the other hand, he mentions as what he disliked in the *Erastians*, "That they made the articles of [the *Holy Catholic Church*, and the *Communion of Saints*] too insignificant, by making church communion more common to the impenitent than Christ would have it; and so dishonoured Christ by dishonouring his church, and making it too like to the heathen world, and breaking down the hedge of spiritual discipline, and laying it almost in common with the wilderness."‡

He mentions, as one of the facts deduced by historical tradition from the primitive age, "the *constant use of Discipline* in the Christian churches: it having been their constant law and practice to inquire into the *faith* and *lives* of the members, and to censure or cast out those that impenitently violated their religion."|| And elsewhere, "The church hath from the beginning had a constant discipline, by which it hath kept

\* Narrative of his own Life, Part iii. p. 123.

† Narrative of Life, part ii. p. 140.

‡ Ib. p. 141.

|| Practical Works, fol. 1707. Life of Faith, vol. iii. p. 549.

itself separate from heretics, who have denied any essential article of this faith: which is a sure tradition of the same belief.”\*

In the third part of his *True and only Way of Concord*, (‘of Schism,’) he says—“To separate from any church by denial of some one *essential part of Christianity*, though all the rest be confessed, is *Heresie* in the *strict sense*, and *Apostasie* in a *larger sense*: and to deny *all Christianity* is *Apostasie* in the strict sense. But the ancient Christians called it *Heresie*, when men separated into distinct opposing bodies as parties, from the generality of Christians, for the cherishing of any dangerous error.” p. 7.

Mr. Hunter states, that “the term Presbyterian originally comprehended all the discontented party in the Church, except perhaps the few Socinians,”†—intimating that those reputed heretics originally formed part of the Nonconformist body. Very different was the language employed by Richard Baxter in 1680. Speaking of the “present state and practice of the *Nonconformists*,” he premises, that he speaks only of *mere Nonconformists* as such, and not men of other principles and parties that conform not, as *Jews, Turks, Socinians, Papists, Familists, Quakers*, &c. p. 87.

The Socinians he expressly calls heretics, in a passage which I shall quote at length, as it shews that he could appreciate good qualities even in those whose doctrines he reprobated and condemned; and is thus alike honourable to his candour, and to his fidelity, as a witness and advocate for Christian truth.

“There is one sort of men that have written many things excellently for Peace, even the *Socinians*, who being Heretics, have thereby done much harm. Divers of them have laid down in general those rules and terms which might much have furthered the church’s peace, if the same things had been written by men of name and reputation. What *Acontius*‡ was, or what *Rupertus Meldenius* was, I am not sure; some say they were Socinians, and some deny it. But I am sure, if

\* *Ib.* p. 921. *Dying Thoughts* (Appendix.)

† *Hist. Def.* p. 15.

‡ Concerning Acontius and his writings, a translation of part of which was published in London, 1647, some curious information will be found in a book entitled,

they were heretical, their excellent precepts for love and peace may rise up in judgment against orthodox persecutors, schismatics, and revilers. Many that are *known* to be *Socinians* have written much for peace; and Satan hath made great advantage of it, to bring all earnest motions for peace into suspicion: so that a man can now scarce write for the retreat of church-warriors, and for the quenching of our consuming flames, but he is presently suspected to be guilty of some Heresy, and to have specially need of charity or toleration himself; like the fox, that, having lost his tail, would have all foxes' tails cut off." p. 21.

In 1668, some conference and correspondence took place between Dr. Owen and Mr. Baxter on "a concord between the Independents and Presbyterians," in which some discussion arose as to the means of keeping out the *Socinians*, "who (says Dr. Owen) are numerous, and ready to include themselves upon our communion." He adds, "the Creed, as expounded in the first four councils, will do it." Mr. Baxter, in reply, states his reasons for not making a larger profession necessary than the Creed and Scriptures. One of them is, that "judging heretics by the law of God is a fitter remedy against heresy, than making a *new rule* for that purpose. Either (he adds) they are heretics only in *heart*, or in *tongue* also, and expression: if in heart only, we have nothing to do to judge them. *Heart infidels* are and will be in the churches. If they be proved to be heretics in *tongue*, then it is either before they are taken into the communion of the church, or after. If *before*, you are to use them as in case of proved wickedness; that is, call them to public repentance before they are admitted: if it be *after*, they must be admonished, and rejected after the first and second contemned admonition. And is not this enough? And is not this the certain regular way? Is it

"The Divine Trinunity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; or the blessed Doctrine of the Three Co-essentiall Subsistents in the Eternal Godhead, without any confusion or division of the distinct Subsistences, or multiplication of the most single and entire Godhead, acknowledged, believed, adored by Christians, in opposition to Pagans, Jews, Mahumetans, Blasphemers, and Antichristian Hereticks, who say they are Christians, but are not; &c. By Francis Cheynell." 12mo. 1650. The author was a famous Presbyterian divine.

not confusion to put *law* for *judgment*, and say there wants a *new law or rule*, when there wants but a *due judgment by the rule in being*.

“If there be nothing against *Socinianism* in the Scripture, it is no heresy: if there be, (as sure there is enough, and plain enough,) judge them by that rule, and make not new ones.”\*

Baxter, while he considered a profession of belief in what he calls “the substance of the doctrine of salvation,” an indispensable prerequisite to church communion; and held that some errors were “damnable, as plainly subverting the foundation of faith,” objected to any words and phrases not found in Scripture, being made necessary for that purpose. “For instance,” he says, “I think the word [Satisfaction] as used by the orthodox, is of a very sound sense in our controversies against the Socinians; and yet I will never account it *necessary*, as long as it is not in the Scriptures, and as long as the words *sacrifice, ransom, price, propitiation, atonement, &c.*, which the Scripture useth, are full as good.”†

He also objected to enlarging the Creed, properly so called, by multiplying the number of articles of faith considered necessary to salvation. But he did not object to confessions and catechisms being used for the purpose of explaining the doctrines held by Nonconformists, and vindicating them from the imputation of maintaining erroneous tenets. This, it appears, was a common practice among them, when misrepresented and traduced by their enemies. I shall give a few instances: and the first shall be from Baxter himself.

“Our Doctrine is published to the world so fully, that no sober man can question us, as a party, for it; but if any individual err, he must be named, and proved faulty. For our very religion is nothing but the law of *Nature*, and the *holy Scriptures*, which we profess to the Papists, that would have more, and to all the world: and we subscribe the doctrine of the Church of *England*, in the Articles, as our explication of the sense of Scripture in those points. Though *God’s word* only be our *religion* in the *rule*, and we profess to disclaim all

\* Narrative of his Life, part iii. pp. 63, 65.

† Practical Works, vol. iii. p. 556.

*additions* or *diminutions*, yet not all *explications* of our understanding the meaning of it; and, therefore, are still ready to give such explicatory Professions to any that suspect, or accuse us of error. And so the *Westminster* Assembly did in their Confession, as all the Reformed Churches have done. But our *religion*, in the *divine rule*, we take for infallible; but our *explications* we take for the corrigible words of fallible men; and as we will take no *other men's* for *infallible*, so we are ready to retract and correct whatever shall be proved faulty in our own.

“Much less can we boast, that *no minister* among us doth ever speak or write *incongruously*, or hath any imperfection or misapprehension of any point or method in theology: we rather *wish* than *hope* for such perfection here. But, besides the foresaid Confessions, our professed doctrine is known by many printed catechisms and treatises, such as Mr. *Ball's* Catechism, and Mr. *Gouge's*, &c.”\*

There are many similar testimonies which might be produced. ~~I will insert a strong declaration by~~ The anonymous author of a small tract, printed in 1680, entitled “English Presbytery; or an Account of the Main Opinions of those Ministers and People in England, who go under the name of Presbyterians,”† published for the vindication of those who were aspersed and calumniated under that title, gives the following decisive testimony:—“In all matters of faith, the Presbyterians believe whatsoever is in the *Apostles' Creed*, the *Nicene Creed*, and the Confessions of Faith of the Churches of God in *Switzerland*, *Holland*, *France*, *Geneva*, the *Articles* of Ireland, our own 39 *Articles*, (with exception only to the *articles* concerning the *ceremonies* and *discipline*,) and defy the doctrines of *Papists*, *Socinians*, *Pelagians*, *Semi-Pelagians*, and all others erring from the faith.”

The Dissenters were charged, in 1686, with “being popishly affected, and joining with the Papists to ruine the

\* The Second Part of the Nonconformists' Plea for Peace, 4to. 1680, p. 192.

† I am aware that the word Presbyterian was frequently used about this time, and for many years after, as a general term, comprehending Dissenters generally; but when so used, it of course included those to whom it was also specifically applied.

Protestant interest.” To this, Mr. James Owen, a very learned Presbyterian minister, at Oswestry, afterwards tutor of an academy in Shrewsbury, answered, that, “of all the imputations cast upon them, none could be more unhappily invented than this;” and assigned ten arguments to disprove the calumnious assertion. The following are some of them:

“1. The Protestant Dissenters cannot be charged with any *Popish* principles. Their Confession of Faith and Catechisms are extant.

“2. Their practices are not *Popish*. They worship no graven images, nor do they pray to saints and angels. They teach no doctrine but that of the 39 Articles of the *Church of England*.

“8. We differ in nothing from them of the Church, but in those things wherein they agree with the *Papists*. It’s true they have rejected their idolatry and grosser errors, and therein we agree with them; but they retain a great many of their ceremonies and superstitions, and therein we differ from them.

“The *Papists* have no controversy with the Church about those points wherein we differ from them; nor have we any controversy with the Church about things wherein they differ from the *Papists*.

“9. In those things wherein we differ from the *Church of England*, we agree with other Reformed Churches.

“10. We profess the orthodox doctrine, in opposition to the *Arminians*. The old doctors of the Church looked upon *Arminianism* as an introduction to *Popery*, and yet how many embrace it in the Church! Who, then, promote *Popery*, they who embrace the *Arminian* errors, or *those who detest them*?”\*

It is generally believed that the greater part of the ministers ejected by the Act of Uniformity, were real Presbyterians, or persons who approved of the mode of church government by presbyteries, synods, and assemblies. Several undoubtedly were such; but many of them, it appears, would

\* Account of the Life of Rev. James Owen, 12mo. 1709., pp. 38—41.

have preferred, as their leaders offered to accept, a scheme of church government framed on the model of the primitive episcopacy. Baxter, himself one of this number, allows, that “in the beginning churches were societies of Christians united for *personal communion*, and that if we go beyond those bounds, we may make a church of a nation, or of ten nations, or what we please, which shall have none of the nature and ends of the primitive particular churches.”\* To apply the term Presbyterian in its original and proper sense, to persons holding these opinions, would be grossly inaccurate, for such, they were not, in the conviction of their judgment. But even supposing that, what they subsequently became, they were rather from necessity than from choice, they certainly adopted in practice, when they gathered separate congregations, what may be called the Congregational principle—that every particular assembly of Christian professors was, in the scripture sense of the word, a church, competent to conduct its own affairs, and administer its own discipline, without being subject to the authoritative interference or control of any other body of Christian professors. Their discipline, therefore, whatever it was, could only be Congregational; nor was there, I believe, an attempt made to set up a more general scheme of church government in any part of the kingdom.

Mr. Hunter has correctly stated, that, “the Independents were from the first for particular churches, each church or body of Christians unconnected with other churches, except as their ministers or people might, for convenience or mutual edification, form voluntary alliances.”† And the English Presbyterian Association, though they represent that, “the ejected members of the Church were still inclined to Presbyterian discipline,” admit that among them, “each congregation necessarily conducted its affairs on an independent principle;” and that, “though calling themselves, from the Act of Uniformity, Presbyterians, they had scarcely one of the old primitive Presbyterian forms among them.”‡

I have already admitted that most of the ejected ministers, who belonged to this denomination, were desirous of being

\* Narrative, &c. part i. p. 140. † Hist. Def. p. 16. ‡ Hist. pp. 10, 11, 33.

comprehended within the pale of the established Episcopal church, could they only have obtained a relaxation of its rigorous impositions, and the removal of its offensive ceremonies. They were, however, compelled to become nonconformists, when the slightest concession was finally refused; and for several years they endured severe privations and sufferings, inflicted by most iniquitous acts of parliament.

A declaration was issued by Charles II., March 15, 1672, dispensing with the penal laws against nonconformists, on which Baxter makes the following remarks—

“This question, whether Toleration of us in our different assemblies, or such an abatement of impositions as would restore some ministers to the public assemblies by a law, were more desirable, was a great controversy then among the nonconformists; and greater it had been, but that the hopes of abatements, (called then a Comprehension,) were so low as made them the less concerned in the agitation of it. But whenever there was a new session of parliament, which put them in some little hopes of abatements, the controversy began to revive, according to the measure of those hopes. The Independents, and all the sectaries, and some few Presbyterians, especially in London, who had large congregations, and liberty and encouragement, were rather for a Toleration. The rest of the Presbyterians, and the Episcopal nonconformists, were for abatement and comprehension.”\*

“The several parties,” says Mr. Orme, after inserting the extract just quoted, “were influenced by their respective principles of church government and civil establishments.”

From this time, it appears the Presbyterians began generally to form separate congregations for divine service.

Mr. Neal gives the following account of the origin and design of the Lecture which was established in this year by the London nonconformists:—

“During this interval of Parliament, the Declaration of Indulgence continued in force, and the Dissenters had rest; when the Presbyterians and Independents, to shew their agreement among themselves, as well as to support the doc-

\* Narrative of Life, part iii. p. 100.



trines of the Reformation against the prevailing errors of Popery, Socinianism, and Infidelity, set up a weekly lecture at Pinner's Hall, in Broad-street, on Tuesday mornings, by the contributions of the principal merchants and tradesmen of their persuasions in the city. Four Presbyterians were joined with two Independents, to preach by turns; and to give it the greater reputation, the principal ministers, for learning and popularity, were chosen into it; as, Dr. Bates, Dr. Manton, Dr. Owen, Mr. Baxter, Mr. Collins, Jenkins, Mead, and afterwards Mr. Alsop, Howe, Cole, and others; and though there were some little misunderstandings at their first setting out, about some high points of Calvinism, occasioned by one of Mr. Baxter's first sermons, yet the lecture continued in this form till the year 1695, when it split upon the same rock, occasioned by reprinting Dr. Crisp's works.\*

The toleration, granted after the Revolution in 1688, put an end to all farther reasonable prospect of such a comprehension as most of the Presbyterians were desirous of obtaining from the legislature. Liberty of separate worship having been conceded by that important measure, little hope remained of this favourite object being attained; and the failure of an attempt made the following year, by Archbishop Tillotson, must have convinced them how vain would be any expectation that the terms of ministerial conformity, or even of lay communion, would hereafter be materially altered, with a view to meet the scruples or to secure the adhesion of any class of nonconformists. Dr. Calamy, 'after mentioning that this act received the royal assent May 24, adds:—"From that time they were easy and thankful, though many of them would have been glad to have been taken into the National Establishment, some hopes of which were still left them, because there was a bill for that purpose yet depending in Parliament."†

The Act of Toleration, 1 W. & M. s. 1, c. 18, exempts nonconformists, upon taking certain oaths, &c. from liability to penalties imposed by an act of Charles II., and expressly extends that exemption to ministers and preachers, who, besides taking the same oaths, &c., "declare their approbation

\* History of the Puritans, vol. iv. p. 369.

† Calamy's Historical Additions, p. 445.

of, and subscribe the Thirty-nine Articles, except the 34th, 35th, and 36th, and a clause in the 20th—and, if Antipædobaptists, part of the 27th—at the General or Quarter Sessions; the declaration and subscription to be entered of record.” “This restriction,” say the English Presbyterian Association, “was offensive to the greater number of Dissenters, especially to those of the Presbyterian party. Baxter, who may be considered their leader, consented to subscribe, and did so conditionally; but he gave his own interpretation of the Articles, and, in so doing, attached a sense to them which was, no doubt, at variance with their strict meaning; adding to his subscription, ‘If I have hit upon the true meaning, I subscribe my assent, and I thank my God that this National Church hath doctrine so sound.’”<sup>\*</sup> The paper which he printed on this occasion, entitled, “Richard Baxter’s Sense of the Subscribed Articles,” 1689, 4to. is inserted in Dr. Calamy’s Historical Additions to the Abridgment of his Life, pp. 469—476. This writer asserts “that the great body of Nonconformists (by which, I presume, he means Nonconformist ministers,) “did not subscribe.” I will quote Dr. Calamy’s own words: “The Dissenting ministers of the several denominations subscribed the doctrinal Articles of the Church of *England*, as the Act of Parliament required: but some few expressions in them being dubious, Mr. Baxter drew up a brief explication, which he gave in for his sense at the time of his subscription, in which many of his brethren concurred with him.”<sup>†</sup> The explication itself is too long to be inserted, but I may venture to assert that his remarks do not affect the substance of any cardinal or vitally important doctrine. How can it be said, with truth, that he attached a sense to the articles (generally) “which was no doubt at variance with their strict meaning,” when he professed merely to state “how he understood the words which he subscribed,” and passed by more than half of the articles to which subscription is required, as “those that *need no exposition?*”<sup>‡</sup> Among these are, the first, “Of Faith in the Holy Trinity;” nearly all the 2nd relating to the Incarnation of the Eternal Word; the 5th,

<sup>\*</sup> Hist. p. 15.

<sup>†</sup> Abridg. Life of Baxter, p. 469.

<sup>‡</sup> Ib. p. 476.

“Of the Holy Ghost;”\* and also the 17th, “Of Predestination and Election.” He thus notices the 8th: “The three creeds, viz. *Nice Creed*, *Athanasius Creed*, and that commonly called the *Apostles’ Creed*, ought thoroughly to be received and believed, [omnino.] *Expos.* Rightly understood, viz.: 1. That by [God of God, very God of very God,] be not meant two Gods. 2. Nor the damnatory clauses taken for part of *Athanasius’* Creed, though they be part of the Liturgy assented and consented to.”†

We have sufficient means of knowing the opinion, not only of Baxter, but of the ejected ministers generally, concerning the creed ascribed to Athanasius. His own distinct acknowledgment, and the testimony supplied by Dr. Calamy, in his “*Lives of the Ejected Ministers*,” furnish ample evidence on this point. Baxter declared, in 1667, “I unfeignedly ac-

\* The following are the Articles above referred to:—

I. There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead, there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

II. *Of the Word, or Son of God, which was made very Man.*

The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man’s nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance: so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men.

[Baxter’s explanatory remark relates merely to the last few words of this article, which he appears to have read thus: “for all the sin of man, original and actual.”]

V. The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.

† “We hold it not unlawful to take oaths and make covenants, subscriptions, or declarations of things lawful, when Authority commandeth us.

“We readily subscribe the doctrine of faith and sacraments contained in the 39 Articles, and differ not therein from the Church of England, that we know of. And though there be some expressions in the Articles which we think not accurate, but liable to an ill interpretation, yet when our consciences tell us that it was truth which was intended, we are willing to overlook infirmity and unfitness of expression, when we see that we are not to own untruths.”—“What Mere Nonconformity Is Not. The Profession of several whom these Times have made and called Nonconformists,” 4to, 1676, pp. 98, 99, annexed to Baxter’s *Second Part of the Nonconformists’ Plea for Peace*.

count the doctrine of the Trinity the very sum and kernel of the Christian Religion, (as exprest in our Baptism,) and Athanasius his Creed the best explication of it that ever I read.”\*

“Our Fathers,” says Dr. Calamy, “approved of the Creed in general, as heartily as their brethren, and esteemed it an excellent explication of the doctrine of the Trinity.”†

They strongly objected, however, to what are usually called “the damnatory clauses” appended to this creed, which, not forming any part of it, might (as Dr. Calamy argues, in defending them and himself,) be held in abhorrence by those who “*thoroughly received* the substance of the creed itself.”‡

It will now be proper to notice what were the opinions of the Presbyterians concerning the securities to be required from persons allowed to officiate as ministers of religion and pastors of churches, for orthodoxy in doctrine. They considered “soundness in the faith” an indispensable prerequisite; and while they declined enforcing subscription to articles containing particular statements of doctrine composed by fallible men, and expressed in mere human terms, they considered it no unwarrantable infringement on the liberty of inquiry, or the right of private judgment, to demand from candidates for the ministerial office such a statement of their doctrinal views as might be sufficient to give reasonable satisfaction on this important point. Nor did they, it appears, object to all subscription even to “creeds,” for this purpose. Baxter, in his Overture for “a Brotherly Agreement” with the Episcopalians, proposed, as one of the terms, “That no subscription be required of the pastors, to any thing about Religion, but to the Holy Scriptures, and the ancient creeds, and to the necessary articles of faith and practice expressed in Scripture terms, and to the renunciation of all heresies contrary thereto.”§

We have seen that, in 1655, he considered the Assembly’s shorter Catechism as “a fit test to try the orthodoxness even of teachers themselves.”||

In his “True and only Way of Concord,” in which he states

\* Reasons of the Christian Religion, 4to, p. 377. † Abridg. Life of Baxter, p. 235.

‡ Defence of Moderate Nonconformity, part ii. pp. 263-265.

§ Narrative of Life, Part II. p. 209.

|| Ante. p. 10.

the bounds which he would set to the toleration of ministers, he distinguishes them into three classes; the approved and maintained—the tolerated—the intolerable. By the last description he intended the preachers of intolerable heresies, whom he elsewhere denominates “heretical seducers.” These, he says, “must be suppressed or restrained, according to the quality of their offence.” He proposes that three several catalogues, or laws, should be drawn up: the first containing “the necessary parts of Christianity and Communion, (the Baptismal Covenant, Creed, Lord’s Prayer, and the essentials of Ministry and Communion,) which all *tolerated* ministers shall *subscribe* to or profess; having also testimonials of their competent abilities, piety, and peaceableness.

“II. Some of the great sort of *integrals* added, that are needful, plain, and certain; and, therefore, it is best in the very words of Scripture, which all agree to; and this to be consented to by the approved and preferred ministers, who shall have the temples, and public countenance and maintenance.

“III. A catalogue of doctrines, of so great use, as that none be suffered to *preach* or privately dispute against them.

“Those that break either of these laws, and subscribe not to the Essentials first mentioned, to be judged intolerable (till reformed) in the ministry.” All such, in his judgment, were to be silenced and restrained by the civil power.

“The *approved*, *tolerable*, and *intolerable*, thus distinguished, and thus used by the magistrate, will best answer the ends and interest of Christianity, and the laws of Christ, and will do as much to preserve love, unity, and peace, as is on earth to be expected, which all other contrary ways will unavoidably violate.”\*

He afterwards gives “a draught or specimen of such forms, for the approved and the tolerated ministers; which,” he says, “I thought to omit, lest it seem presumptuous: but the observation how ordinarily men miscarry in this work, hath persuaded me to run the hazard of men’s censures.”†

\* Pp. 262—267.

† P. 279.

*The Form to be subscribed by the Approved Ministry.*

*The form common  
to all Christians.—*  
Matt. xxviii. 19.  
Mark xvi. 16.

“ I, A. B., do seriously, as in the sight of God, profess, that as I have been in baptism devoted by the sacred covenant to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, renouncing the devil, the world, and the flesh, so far as they are his enemies ; so I do unfeignedly believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and consent still to that covenant, in hope of the grace and glory promised, obliging myself to continue, by the help of that grace, in *Faith, Love, and sincere obedience*, to the end.

“ *More particularly,*

*Assent.* “ I.—I do unfeignedly believe, 1. that there is One only God, an infinite Spirit of life, understanding, and will ; most perfectly powerful, wise, and good ; incomprehensibly Three in One, and One (essence) in Three (called persons, or subsistences, by the church), the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things ; he being the Creator, Preserver, Governor, and the ultimate End of all : our absolute Owner, our most just Ruler, and our most gracious and amiable Father and Benefactor.

“ 2. I believe that this God created all the world, things invisible and visible ; and made man in his own image, forming a fit body, and breathing into it a spirit of life, understanding and will ; fitted and obliged to know, love, and serve his Creator ; giving him the inferior creatures for this use, making him their owner, their governor, and their end, under God ; but specially forbidding him to eat of the tree of knowledge, on pain of death.

“ 3. The woman being tempted by Satan, and the man by the woman, both fell by wilful sin from their holiness, innocence and happiness, into a state of pravity, guilt and misery, under the slavery of the devil, world and flesh, under God’s vindictive justice, and the condemnation of his law ; whence sinful, corrupted, guilty, and miserable natures are propagated to all mankind. Eph. ii. 3. And no mere creature is able to deliver us.

“ II.—I believe that God so loved the world that he gave his only Son to be their Saviour ; who, being God, and one with the Father, took our nature, and became man ; being conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, named Jesus, the Christ ; who was perfectly holy, without sin, fulfilling all righteousness ; and, being tempted, overcame the devil and the world ; and, after a life of humiliation, gave himself a sacrifice for our sins, by suffering a cursed death on the cross, to ransom us and reconcile us unto God, and was buried, and descended to *Hades* ; and, conquering death, the third day he rose again. And having sealed the New Covenant with his blood, he commanded his Apostles to preach the Gospel to all the world, and promised the Holy Ghost ; and after forty days ascended into heaven,

where he is God and man, the glorified Head over all things to his church, all power being given him in heaven and earth ; our prevailing Intercessor with God the Father, to present us and our service acceptable to God, and communicate God's grace and mercies unto us ; to teach us, govern, protect and judge us, and to save, and bless, and glorify us.

"2. By the New Testament, Covenant, or Law of grace, God, through the aforesaid mediation of Jesus Christ, doth freely give to fallen mankind, Himself to be their reconciled God and Father, his Son to be their Saviour, and his Holy Spirit to be their Sanctifier and Comforter, if they will accordingly believe and accept the gift, and by faithful covenant give up themselves to him in these relations ; repenting of their sins, and consenting to forsake the devil, the world and the flesh, so far as they are enemies to God and their salvation, and sincerely to obey Christ, his laws, and his Spirit to the end, bearing the cross, and following him through sufferings, that they may reign with him in glory. All which God will faithfully perform.

"III.—I believe that God the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and from (or by) the Son, was given to the Prophets, Apostles, and Evangelists, to be their infallible guide in preaching and recording the doctrine of salvation, and to be the great witness of Christ and his truth, by his manifold divine operations. And that he is given to quicken, illuminate, and sanctify all true believers, and to save them from the devil, the world, and the flesh's temptations, from sin, and from spiritual misery.

"2. I believe that all who by true consent are devoted to God in the foresaid baptismal covenant, and so continue, are one sanctified Church, or body of Christ ; and have communion in the same spirit of faith and love, and have forgiveness of their sins ; and having one God, one Christ, one Spirit, one faith, one baptism, and one hope of heavenly glory, are bound to keep this unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, in the doctrine, worship, order and conversation, and mutual helps, which Christ hath by himself or his Apostles commanded, avoiding uncharitable contentions, divisions, injuries, and offences. And that the baptised covenanters, and external professors of the foresaid covenant-consent, are the visible church universal, and such as we must have outward communion with, though only the sincere believers and consenters shall be saved.

"3. I believe that at death the spirits of the justified go to happiness with Christ, and the souls of the wicked to misery. And that at the end of this world Christ will come in glory, and will raise the bodies of all men from death, and will judge all according to their works ; and that the righteous shall go into everlasting life, where, being perfected themselves, they shall see God, and perfectly love and praise him in joy, with Christ and all the glorified Church ; and that

the rest shall go into everlasting punishment, where their worm never dieth, and their fire is never quenched.

*Consent and Desire.* “II.—As I believe thus in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, according to the Sacred Scriptures, and the Creeds and constant Profession of the universal Christian Church, so I do unfeignedly continue to give up myself presently, absolutely, and resolvedly, to this God, my Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier, according to the covenant of grace; that I may be resigned to the will of God, my Owner, and obey the will of God, my Ruler, and please and rest in the will and love of God, my Father, the chiefest End and infinite Good. And renouncing all idols and enemies of God and this his Covenant, I consent, though with the cross, to follow Christ, the Captain of my salvation, to the death, desiring still more of the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, and hoping for the promised glory. All which I pray for, according to that prayer which Christ hath left to be the summary directory of our desires: ‘Our Father, which art in heaven,’ &c.

*Practice.* “III.—According to the foresaid belief and consent, as God hath obliged me, I do by covenant oblige myself, by the help of his grace, sincerely to obey this God, my Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, according to the law of nature, summed up in the two great commands of loving God with all our hearts, and our neighbours as ourselves; and in the Ten Commandments, as the law of Christ explained by him, with his superadded precepts and institutions. By all which I am bound to take God only for my God, by believing, fearing, trusting, loving, and obeying him; to avoid all idolatry of mind and body, to worship God according to his law, by learning and meditating on his word, by believing, holy fervent prayer, thanksgiving and praise, and the holy use of the sacrament of his body and blood. I must reverently and holily use his name, and not by perjury, or otherwise, profane it. I must keep holy the Lord’s day, especially in holy communion with the Christian assemblies, in the public worship of God, and thankful commemoration of Christ’s resurrection and our redemption.”—[Some other specific practical duties are then mentioned.]

“2. And as the special duty of my office, as in the sacred ministry, I do consent and promise sincerely to perform that office for the flock over which I shall be placed, or wherever I am called to exercise it; teaching them the doctrine of the Sacred Scriptures, especially the greatest and most necessary parts, which I have here professed, and nothing contrary thereto, so far as by diligent study I can discern it, exhorting them to live by faith in love to God and man, and in the joyful hope of heavenly glory; in humility, self-denial, temperance, patience, justice, diligence, and fruitfulness in all good works.



Other duties are then enumerated, particularly those to civil rulers, after which follows "the Renunciation," which commences thus:—

"And as I have thus unfeignedly professed my belief, my consent, and promised practice, so I heartily renounce all doctrines, desires and practices contrary to any part of this Profession. And if by error I hold, or shall hold, any thing contrary thereto, as soon as I discern such contrariety, I will renounce it."<sup>\*</sup>

This form of profession clearly shews the importance which Baxter attached to a correct and scriptural belief, especially in the doctrine of the Trinity, by all approved public teachers of religion. Eminently practical as was the character both of his preaching and of his writings, he was very remote from that latitudinarian indifference to religious truth, which has with so much confidence of assertion been ascribed to the Presbyterians. On the contrary, it was their invariable custom to institute very particular and minute inquiries into the faith of those who proposed themselves for admission to the sacred office, on the principle that persons who teach erroneous doctrine spread mischief among the churches, and expose to jeopardy the souls of their hearers. So far from "viewing with equal charity all conscientious differences of doctrine," they denied that those who propagated heretical opinions could be justly called Christian ministers, and declared that such should be restrained by the arm of the civil power. We cannot therefore wonder that in the Act of Toleration, an act framed, there is reason to believe, with a view to meet the feelings and opinions of the leading Dissenters at that time, a clause was inserted to exclude from the benefit of it "those who denied the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity as declared in the Articles of Religion."

"Some," say the English Presbyterian Association, "take high ground indeed in the argument, who refuse to those who dissent from the doctrine of the Trinity the title of Christian."<sup>†</sup> Without offering any opinion of my own upon this point, I will again appeal to the most eminent of "the old Presbyterians," who has "sanctioned the charge" lately made against them. That individual, they themselves denominate, and justly, "one of the ablest and most cele-

<sup>\*</sup> Pp. 279—288.

<sup>†</sup> Hist. pp. 63, 64.

brated of the Presbyterian ministers." In a book published in 1681, after having declared concerning himself: "I am against all sects and dividing parties—if the name of CHRISTIAN be not enough, call me a Catholic Christian;" he speaks in these terms of "the dangerous heresy of Arius," [that "Christ was a superangelical perfect Spirit, by which God made all the rest of the creatures."]<sup>—</sup>"He that denieth the Deity of Christ, denieth his Essence; and he that denieth his Essence, denieth Christ, and is no Christian."<sup>\*</sup> We are told, indeed, that "there is a sense in which many persons who hold Unitarian tenets, allow Jesus Christ to be God,"<sup>†</sup> but I presume there are none of them who do not deny what Baxter here strongly affirms—his *Essential Deity*, and such, in that great man's estimation, are no Christians.—"The modern Presbyterian refuses," it is said, "to employ unscriptural phrases respecting the Trinity, or to adopt those terms which the Articles of the Church of England, or the Assembly's Catechism, have connected with it;" whereas it is admitted, that "the early Presbyterians assented to those terms."<sup>‡</sup> But a very eminent Unitarian minister and tutor, now living, refuses to assent even to terms that are found in Scripture. Mr. Wellbeloved, "preferring scriptural to dogmatical phraseology,"<sup>§</sup> has, on a recent occasion, made a declaration of his faith, *on oath*, "in the text and words of Scripture." From this it appears, that he is not one of those Unitarians who admit Jesus Christ to be God in any sense; for, quoting the first verse of the Gospel of John, he mutilates the language of the sacred writer, omitting a portion of the sentence in which it is expressly declared that "the Word *was* God." He says, "I acknowledge Jesus to be the Word that in the beginning was with God,"<sup>||</sup> and there he stops, leaving in the mind of every reader the inevitable conclusion,

<sup>\*</sup> Church-History of Bishops and their Councils, 4to.: Addendum to Preface, *prope finem*, p. 48. He gives this account of the state of things at Kidderminster, while he was minister of the place. "In my own charge, (a great parish, of many thousand souls,) where I was above fourteen years, we had no one separate assembly, nor one sectary, that I remember, save two or three apostate Infidels, (or Socinians,) and two or three Papists." The True and only Way of Concord, p. 276.

<sup>†</sup> Hist. p. 77.

<sup>‡</sup> Ib. p. 46.

<sup>§</sup> Ib. p. 114. <sup>||</sup> Ib. p. 66.

that he does not acknowledge what immediately follows, and is separated only by a comma—"and the Word was God." Mr. Wellbeloved, therefore, according to Baxter, is no Christian; and all who assert that Jesus Christ is a mere man, or less than "essentially God," are not true believers. Now, let the reader judge of the truth of the following assertion:—"If the Presbyterians were at any time generally Trinitarian, it was not from abhorrence of other doctrines. Their preference was accompanied by no such feeling.... Interference with religious belief was regarded as more mischievous than all the errors ignorance or weakness might produce.... Any other course would have produced a habit of pursuing error, or, by favouring indifference, have perpetuated mischievous opinions."\* So thought not Baxter. Very different was the principle which this "leader of the Presbyterian party" advocated;—a principle which, in my opinion, was carried to an extreme, when the civil magistrate was called in to suppress heresy. The preachers of "error and mischievous opinions," he held that the supreme power in the state should not suffer to be admitted into the ministry; and this principle succeeding Presbyterians continued to hold for several years after his death, as will be shewn in subsequent pages.

An Agreement for Union between the Presbyterian and the Independent ministers in and near London was concluded in 1691. The two bodies had been gradually approximating for several years. The Congregational had generally laid aside some of their peculiarities of ecclesiastical usage, and the Presbyterian had been compelled to renounce all hope of a comprehension with the Established Church. Thus prepared to unite, measures were adopted, soon after the Revolution, for accomplishing the object, which, after several meetings, was, at length, happily effected. The important document drawn up on this occasion, having been committed to the press, enables us to give a correct and authentic account of the nature of the Agreement, the particulars it embraced, and the principles on which it was formed. It is entitled "Heads of Agreement assented to by the United Ministers in and about London,

\* Hist. pp. 53, 54.

formerly called Presbyterian and Congregational, 4to, 1691." To the document itself is prefixed a notice that "it had been resolved upon not as a measure for any national constitution, but for the preservation of order in their congregations, that cannot come up to the common rule by law established." The preface to the reader I will insert entire.

"Endeavours for an Agreement among Christians will be grievous to none who desire the flourishing state of Christianity itself. The success of these attempts among us must be ascribed to a presence of God, so signal as not to be concealed, and seems a hopeful pledge of further blessings.

"The favour of our rulers, in the present established liberty, we most thankfully acknowledge; and to them we are studious to approve ourselves in the whole of this affair. Therefore, we declare against intermeddling with the *National Church Form*. Imposing these terms of Agreement, on others is disclaimed. All pretence to coercive power is as unsuitable to our principles as to our circumstances: Excommunication itself, in our respective churches, being no other than a declaring such scandalous members as are irreclaimable, to be incapable of communion with us in things peculiar to visible believers. And in all, we expressly determine our purpose, to the maintaining of harmony and love among ourselves, and preventing the inconveniences which human weakness may expose to, in our use of this liberty.

"The general concurrence of ministers and people in this city, and the great disposition thereto in other places, persuade us this happy work is undertaken, in a season designed for such divine influence as will overcome all impediments to peace, and convince of that Agreement which has been always among us in a good degree, though neither to ourselves nor others so evident as hereby it is now acknowledged.

"Need there any arguments to recommend this Union? Is not this what we all have prayed for; and Providence, by the directest indications, hath been long calling and disposing us to? Can either zeal for God or prudent regards to ourselves remissly suggest it, seeing the blessings thereof are so important, and when it's become, in so many respects, even absolutely necessary; especially as it may conduce to the preservation of the Protestant religion, and the kingdom's weal; a subserviency whereto shall always govern our united abilities, with the same disposition to a concurrence with all others who are duly concerned for those national blessings.

"As these considerations render this Agreement desirable, so they equally urge a watchful care against all attempts of Satan to dissolve it, or frustrate the good effects thereof, so manifestly destructive

to his kingdom. Therefore, it's incumbent<sup>\*</sup> on us to forbear condemning and disputing those different practices we have expressly allowed for; to reduce all distinguishing names to that of UNITED BRETHREN; to admit no uncharitable jealousies, or censorious speeches; much less any debates whether party seems most favoured by this Agreement. Such carnal regards are of small moment with us, who herein have used words less accurate, that neither side might in their various conceptions about lesser matters be contradicted, when in all substantials we are fully of one mind; and from this time hope more perfectly to rejoice in the honour, gifts, and success of each other, as our *common* good.

"That we, as *United*, may contribute our utmost to the great concerns of our Redeemer, it's mutually resolved we will assist each other with our labours, and meet and consult, without the least shadow of separate or distinct parties: whence we joyfully expect great improvements in light and love, through the more abundant supplies of the Spirit; being well assured we herein serve that *Prince of peace, of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end.*"

I shall insert such portions of the Heads themselves, as appear to bear directly on the present inquiry.

#### I. *Of CHURCHES and CHURCH MEMBERS.*

"1. We acknowledge our Lord Jesus Christ to have one catholic church, or kingdom, comprehending all that are united to him, whether in heaven or earth; and do conceive the whole multitude of *visible believers*, and their infant seed, (commonly called the *Catholic visible Church*,) to belong to Christ's spiritual kingdom in this world.\*

\* The English Presbyterian Association state, that "the two great bodies of Dissenters, for a short period, endeavoured to form, with the Baptists, one general Nonconformist body."\* This, it will be seen, is not correct. The pastors, elders, and ministering brethren, of upwards of one hundred "baptized congregations, in divers parts of England and Wales, owning the doctrine of personal election and final perseverance, or, (as they otherwise express their sentiments,) "denying Arminianism," held a General Assembly, in London, in September, 1689, at which they owned a Confession of their Faith, agreed on a general epistle to all their churches, determined to raise a common fund or stock, for assisting in the education and support of their ministers, and discussed various questions relating to the interest of their body. At the General Assembly, in June, 1690, Associations of Churches were formed in different parts of the country. Narratives of the proceedings were printed, from which this account is taken. The Arminian portion of this denomination, commonly called General Baptists, had, I believe, associated from a much earlier period.

\* Hist. p. 118.

"2. We agree, that particular societies of visible saints, who, under Christ their head, are statedly joined together for ordinary communion with one another, in all the ordinances of Christ, are *particular churches*, and are to be owned by each other as instituted churches of Christ, though differing in apprehensions and practice in some lesser things.

"3. That none shall be admitted as members in order to communion in all the special ordinances of the Gospel, but such persons as are knowing and sound in the *fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion*, without scandal in their lives; and to a judgment regulated by the word of God, are persons of visible godliness and honesty; credibly professing cordial subjection to Jesus Christ.

"4. A competent number of such *visible saints* (as before described) do become the capable subjects of stated communion in all the special ordinances of Christ, upon this mutual declared consent and agreement to walk together therein according to the Gospel rule. In which declaration, different degrees of explicitness shall no way hinder such churches from owning each other as instituted churches.

"6. That each particular church hath right to choose their own officers; and, being furnished with such as are *duly qualified and ordained* according to the Gospel rule, hath authority from Christ for exercising *government*, and of enjoying all the ordinances of worship within itself.

"7. In the administration of *church power*, it belongs to the *pastors* and the *elders* of every particular church (if such there be) to *rule and govern*; and to the brotherhood to *consent*, according to the rule of the Gospel.

"8. That all professors (as before described) are bound in duty, as they have opportunity, to join themselves as *fixed members* of some particular church.

## II. *Of the MINISTRY.*

"1. We agree that the ministerial office is instituted by Jesus Christ, for the gathering, edifying, and governing of his church; and to continue to the end of the world.

"2. They who are called to this office ought to be endued with competent learning and ministerial gifts, as also with the grace of God, sound in judgment, not novices in the faith and knowledge of the Gospel; without scandal, of holy conversation, and such as devote themselves to the work and service thereof.

"3. That ordinarily none shall be ordained to the work of the ministry, but such as are called and chosen thereunto by a particular church.

"4. That in so great and weighty a matter as the calling and choosing a pastor, we judge it ordinarily requisite that every such

church consult and advise with the pastors of neighbouring congregations.

“5. That after such advice, the person consulted about being chosen by the brotherhood of that particular church over which he is to be set, and he accepting, be duly ordained and set apart to his office over them ; wherein 'tis ordinarily requisite that the pastors of neighbouring congregations concur with the preaching elder or elders, if such there be.

“6. That whereas such ordination is only intended for such as never before had been ordained to the ministerial office ; if any judge that in case of a removal of one formerly ordained, to a new station or pastoral charge, there ought to be a like solemn recommending him and his labours to the grace and blessing of God, no different sentiments or practice herein shall be any occasion of contention or breach of communion among us.

“7. It is expedient that they who enter on the work of preaching the Gospel, be not only qualified for communion of saints,\* but also that, except in cases extraordinary, they give proof of their gifts and fitness for the said work unto the pastors of churches of known abilities, to discern and judge of their qualifications,† that they may be sent forth with solemn approbation and prayer ; which we judge needful, that no doubt may remain concerning their being called to the work, and for preventing (as much as in us lieth) ignorant and rash intruders.

### III.—Of CENSURES.

“1. As it cannot be avoided but that, in the purest churches on earth, there will sometimes offences and scandals arise, by reason of hypocrisy and prevailing corruption ; so Christ hath made it the duty of every church to reform itself by *spiritual remedies*, appointed by him to be applied in all such cases ; viz. *admonition* and *excommunication*.—[Particulars here follow, of the mode in which these spiritual remedies are to be applied.]

### “IV.—Of COMMUNION OF CHURCHES.

“1. We agree, that particular churches ought not to walk so distinct and separate from each other, as not to have care and tenderness towards one another : but their pastors ought to have frequent meetings together, that, by mutual advice, support, encouragement, and brotherly intercourse, they may strengthen the hearts and hands of each other in the ways of the Lord.

“2. That none of our particular churches shall be *subordinate* to one

\* The reader should bear in recollection what is said on this point in the third article, under the first division.

† This, which was afterwards commonly called “passing trial,” will be more particularly noticed afterwards.

another, each being endowed with *equality of power* from Jesus Christ. And that none of the said particular churches, their officer or officers, shall exercise any power, or have any superiority, over any other church, or their officers.

“ 6. That we are most willing and ready to give an account of our church proceedings to each other, when desired, for preventing or removing any offences that may arise among us. Likewise, we shall be ready to give the right-hand of fellowship, and walk together according to the gospel rules of communion of churches.

“ V.—Of DEACONS and RULING ELDERS.

“ We agree [that] the office of a Deacon is of divine appointment; and that it belongs to their office to receive, lay out, and distribute the church's stock to its proper uses, by the direction of the pastor, and the brethren if need be. And whereas divers are of opinion that there is also the office of Ruling Elders, who labour not in *word* and *doctrine*, and others think otherwise, we agree that this difference make no breach among us.

“ VI.—Of OCCASIONAL MEETINGS OF MINISTERS, &c.

“ 1. We agree, that in order to concord, and in any other weighty and difficult cases, it is needful, and according to the mind of Christ, that the ministers of several churches be consulted and advised with about such matters.

“ 2. That such Meetings may consist of smaller or greater numbers, as the matter shall require.

“ 3. That particular churches, their respective elders and members, ought to have a reverential regard to their judgment so given; and not dissent therefrom without apparent grounds from the word of God.

“ VII.—Of our Demeanour towards the CIVIL MAGISTRATE.

“ 1. We do reckon ourselves obliged continually to pray for God's protection, guidance, and blessing upon the rulers set over us.

[Two other articles relate to the duty of yielding subjection and support, and readiness to furnish any account of their affairs, and the state of their congregations.]

“ VIII.—Of a CONFESSION OF FAITH.

“ As to what appertains to soundness of judgment in matters of Faith, we esteem it sufficient that a church acknowledge the Scriptures to be the Word of God, the perfect and only rule of faith and practice; and own either the doctrinal part of those commonly called the Articles of the Church of England, or the Confession, or Catechisms, Shorter or Larger, compiled by the Assembly at Westminster, or the Confession agreed on at the Savoy, to be agreeable to the said rule.



“IX.—*Of our Duty and Deportment towards them that are not in communion with us.*

“1. We judge it our duty to bear a Christian respect to all Christians, according to their several ranks and stations, that are not of our persuasion or communion.

“2. As for such as may be ignorant of the principles of the Christian religion, or of vicious conversation, we shall, in our respective places, as they give us opportunity, endeavour to explain to them the *Doctrine of Life and Salvation*; and, to our uttermost, persuade them to be reconciled to God.

“3. That such who appear to have the *essential requisites* to church communion, we shall willingly receive them in the Lord, not troubling them with disputes about *lesser matters*.”

This official document clearly shews that the Agreement was founded on the principle of mutual concession, and formed with a view to the accommodation of slight differences chiefly of an ecclesiastical nature. It bears on the face of it the design of bringing two parties, very nearly agreed in opinion, and only differing in a few comparatively unimportant points, to combine and associate, by bringing the ministers, who acted as their leaders, into a state of friendly alliance and co-operation. These determine henceforth to lay aside petty jealousies, to recognise each other as brethren in the ministry, and the particular churches over which they presided, as associated churches; to meet, consult, and act harmoniously together, bearing with each other in respect to the few and minute points in which they might differ. It furnishes not the slightest ground to suppose that, with reference to what they call *the fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion*, in which they required not only their ministers, but the members of their churches to be “knowing and sound,” they were in any respect, or in the least degree, “otherwise minded.” In reference to these, it might be said, “Whereunto we have already attained,” we are already agreed to “walk by the same rule, to mind the same thing.” In matters of church order, and the administration of discipline, each party might have something to concede, or at least to tolerate, in the other; but, in respect to “*the doctrine of life and salvation*,”—that truth which is eminently called “*the Gospel*,” in “the

faith and knowledge" of which they require that those called to the ministerial office, which they describe as "the work of preaching the Gospel," should not be "novices,"—there is not the slightest appearance of any difference then existing; while the recognition of those Confessions and Catechisms, to which the reader's attention has already been directed, as embodying the substance of their belief, and proclaiming to the world their "soundness of judgment in matters of faith," puts the real fact beyond the reach of reasonable question. I admit, however, that there had been, and that probably there were, some slight shades of difference in the manner of explaining certain subordinate or even important points of doctrine. Mr. Orme gives a similar account of the nature and design of this Union—"The object of the Agreement was rather to discountenance useless contentions about matters of ecclesiastical discipline, among the Dissenters, than to form a corporate body, or to convey the idea of entire agreement on doctrinal points."\* Referring to some earlier differences, or supposed differences, among the lecturers at Pinner's Hall, in a preceding page, he says—"I believe the whole matter was, the Independent ministers were more thorough systematic Calvinists than the Presbyterians, though there was no difference of importance between them."† I may safely assert, therefore, that in the year 1691, there was a substantial agreement on all the great leading doctrines. The principal subject on which some slight difference had previously existed, and might still exist, was, the exact method, the precise terms, or mode of Justification. Concerning the sole medium through which that blessing is bestowed on individuals of the human race—the meritorious obedience, sufferings, and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal Word incarnate—there was no diversity of sentiment. The chief leaders of the two denominations, Baxter and Owen, had disputed in print on some of the nice and abstruse questions connected with this doctrine; but, to prove that there was no serious or substantial difference between

\* Life and Times of Baxter, vol. i. p. 492.

† Ib. p. 408.

them, I will here advert to a remarkable fact mentioned by Dr. Calamy—

Mr. Samuel Clark, an ejected minister, published Annotations on the Bible, which he describes as “a work of great exactness and judgment,” and concerning which he says—“He was so happy in this performance, as to obtain the concurring testimony of two great and excellent men, who were thought to have different sentiments of some points of religion; viz. Dr. *Owen*, and Mr. *Baxter*; in their respective epistles before the 4to. edition of the New Testament. The words of the former are remarkable:—*But this I must say, that, to the best of my understanding, he has made his choice of the especial sense which he gives of the word, in all places, with great diligence and judgment. And 'tis evident, that in the whole, he has so carefully and constantly attended to the Analogy of Faith, that the reader may safely trust to him, without fear of being led into the snare of any error, or unsound opinion.* The words of the latter are these: *And I especially commend it as Orthodox, in explaining those texts which meddle with justification, remission of sin, with faith and works, and such great and practical points of doctrine; so that the reader need not fear the corrupting his understanding by any secret insinuation of errors, or dangerous mixture of private and unsound opinions.* Since both of them herein freely expressed their proper sentiments, 'tis scarce conceivable how there could be any very important difference remaining between them.”\*

The English Presbyterian Association represent, that “the joint lecture at Pinner’s Hall was established whilst the Union lasted,” and that the Heads of Agreement were “apparently assented to, as the means of peace between the contending parties,” in consequence of an attempt to effect a permanent removal of some doctrinal differences, which, however, still remained.† Here are several mistakes in a few lines. The joint lecture had been established nearly twenty years previously, and the document itself drawn up on this important occasion,

\* Account of the Ejected Ministers, 8vo. 1713, pp. 106, 107.

† Hist. p. 19.

was not *apparently*, but actually and avowedly assented to, at a time when there was no momentous or considerable diversity of opinion on doctrinal points among the ministers of the two respective bodies.\*

At the time when the Heads of Agreement were printed, they had been "already assented to by above fourscore ministers, and the Preface approved of." This was probably in March or April, 1691. They were evidently then disposed to carry the design into practical effect. This appears by the form of expressing their approbation—"As we assent to the forementioned Heads of Agreement, so we unanimously resolve, as the Lord shall enable us, to *practise* according to them."

Mr. Baxter, who "was, by the confinement of decrepit age and pain, hindered from having any part in the form or contract of this Agreement," published a tract, with a view to "second" it, entitled—"Church Concord: containing, 1. A Dissuasive from unnecessary Division and Separation, and the real Concord of the moderate Independents with the Presbyterians instanced in ten seeming differences; 2. The Terms necessary for Concord among all true Churches and Christians, 4to. 1691." At the end of the preface is a brief Address to the United Protestant Nonconformists in London, dated April 23, which concludes in these words—"Thus praying God to save you from violating the Concord you consent to, and from being perverted by the ignorant dividing sort of teachers or people, and that you will study Mr. Mead's Reasons against Division, well and seasonably urged, I bid you farewell. Your *quondam* fellow-labourer, Rich. Baxter."† The first part had been written in 1655, the second in 1667. Both exhibit the sentiments already explained as to Catholic Christianity, comprehensive communion, and magisterial restraint of

\* The volumes of Lectures preached by ministers of both denominations, and published under the title of "Morning Exercises," afford ample evidence of their being alike orthodox.

† Mr. Orme does not mention this tract, and probably had not seen a copy. He correctly states, however, that the venerable author, though he felt a deep interest, took no active part in this affair: and adds, "the style of these articles shews, I think, that Baxter's judgment and feelings had been consulted."—Life and Times of Baxter, vol. i. p. 492. He died December 8, this year.

heretical preachers. The following extracts may suffice to prove this :

“ If we would prevent our people’s separations, we must not make the door of the church so narrow as to shut out the faithful, though infirm. Men must be called to no Profession but of points plainly contained in the Holy Scriptures, and the ancient simplicity must recover us to the ancient charity and unity. And though more knowledge be necessary to the pastors than to all the flock, yet must the Scripture sufficiency be maintained, and necessary things distinguished from unnecessary, and those that are necessary to the being of the ministry from those that are necessary but to the better being ; and nothing should be imposed on pastors themselves as necessary to the communion of churches, but points that indeed are necessary to such communion, and those (if possible) in Scripture phrase. But because Heretics will subscribe to Scripture and to ancient creeds, and simple confessions of faith, therefore many have thought that other kind of confessions must be made which they cannot subscribe to.”—He proceeds to point out “ the right way of obviating heresies, viz. a careful execution of the law or rule of Scripture against them : 1. By casting them out of our communion after a first and second admonition, when they are proved guilty ; and, 2. By the magistrate’s restraining them, according to the quality of their offence.”\*

“ Let the doctrinal point of *the necessity of more pastors to ordain*, be let alone, and left to each man’s liberty, (it being no article of our Creed, nor a *credendum* of absolute necessity.)†

“ All Christian magistrates must know that their subjects are,  
1. Approveable. 2. Tolerable. 3. Intolerable : specially as teachers.

“ I. The approveable they must encourage and maintain.

“ II. The tolerable they must tolerate.

“ III. The intolerable they must suppress. But if they misjudge, God will judge them for it.

“ Pastors of their own choosing should be licensed to tolerated churches. 1. Subscribing the essentials of Christianity, &c.‡

A Sermon was preached in London, upon the occasion of ratifying these Heads of Agreement, by Mr. Matthew Mead, an eminent Congregational minister, and pastor of a large church at Stepney, which still flourishes, and is now under the care of Dr. Joseph Fletcher. Mr. Mead (father of the celebrated Dr. Mead) had been one of the most active promoters of the Union. His discourse, founded on Ezek. xxxvii. 19, was

\* P. 13.

† P. 24.

‡ P. 76.

published under the following title : “ Two Sticks made One or, the Excellency of UNITY. Being a Sermon preached by the Appointment of the Ministers of the Congregational and Presbyterian Persuasion, at their Happy UNION, on the sixth day of April, 1691, which was a day set apart by them, partly to bewail former Divisions, and partly as a Thanksgiving to God for their present Agreement; and now, at their unanimous request, made public.”

It is dedicated “ to the Reverend the Dissenting Ministers of London, formerly called *Congregational* and *Presbyterian*, but now known by the name of UNITED BRETHREN.” A few extracts will shew the sentiments of the excellent author, in reference to the nature and extent of the Union, as well as the views, which he undoubtedly possessed in common with the whole body, of the value and importance of some of the great truths in which they were, as they professed to be, agreed; and at the same time afford some information concerning the circumstances which led to the event.

“ God hath eminently appeared among you hitherto, in carrying on this blessed work.\*

“ Jerome calls divisions, *Amicorum dispendia, inimicorum compendia, divina iræ incendia*. So that we may say of them what *Austin* says of original sin—*Peccatum, causa peccati, pœna peccati*: They are not only sin, and the cause of sin, but the punishment of sin too; so that they are nothing but a heap of sin.†

“ There are several sorts of *oneness* in Scripture. There is a *oneness* of divers persons in one nature; there is a *oneness* of differing natures in one person; and there is a *oneness* of sundry names and persons in one quality. In the first is one God, Deut. vi. 4. In the second, one Christ, 1 Cor. viii. 6. In the third, one church. Cant. vi. 9; Acts iv. 32.‡

“ It implies a union in the truth; every union is not one in God’s hand. There may be union in sin, a union in error. This is so far from being a union in the hand of God, that it is the quite contrary; it is a union in the hand of Satan.

“ *In that day, [the day when Christ shall be King over all the earth,] the Lord shall be one, and his name one*, Zech. xiii. 19; differing ways and modes of worship shall cease, all his people shall be united in the

\* Dedication.

† P. 2.

‡ P. 5.

same mind and judgment, and shall own God in the same truth, and the same way of worship.”\* [He here refers to the millennial state of the church.]

Among those reasons against divisions which Mr. Baxter a few weeks afterwards recommended to special attention, are :—

“ Divisions are a great grief to the Spirit of God, and we are commanded not to grieve him. Eph. iv. 30, *Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God*. Have ye not your light and life from the Spirit? Did not he convince, and convert, and draw you to Christ? Was it not he that led you into the secrets of God? that revealed the mysteries of the kingdom, the deep things of God, and eternal life, to you? Your calling had never been effectual, if the Spirit had not been in it to make it so. Are not your parts, and gifts, and various attainments, all from the Spirit? And is not every grace, and every degree of grace in you, the workmanship of the Spirit? And is it not the Spirit that quickens you in duties, and maintains in you a frame of heart for communion with God? Who is it that comforts your souls in troubles, and that teaches you to comfort others?—that helps you against corruptions within, and temptations without?—that conquers your difficulties, and enables you to rejoice in tribulation? Is it not the Spirit? Is not he the *earnest of your inheritance*? Hath he not *sealed you to the day of redemption*? And will you grieve this Spirit? Oh, what an evil is this!

“ 3. There is nothing more contrary to Christianity; and yet we cover our divisions under the cloak of religion, the very name whereof carries union with it: *Religio à religando*. It is the bond of God upon the soul, that binds us all to himself and one another. As God is the *God of peace*, Christ the *Prince of peace*, the Holy Ghost the *Spirit of peace*, his children the *children of peace*; so the Gospel you profess and preach is the *Gospel of peace*, full of precepts of peace.†

“ Divisions are against love, as error is against faith. It cuts asunder the bond of peace. Not only kingdoms, but churches, are destroyed when their guides and leaders are divided in opinion and affection.‡

Among the reasons why they should humble themselves before God, for their former divisions, he specifies—

“ The offences and scandals given to many, whereby their souls have been eternally hazarded. And should not the sense of this affect us? Some diseases are called *opprobria medicorum*; I am sure these are *opprobria theologorum*. O let us join in this one thing, to mourn

\* P. 13.

† P. 5, 16.

‡ P. 17.

together, till we have dissolved our hearts into tears, and see if they'll run one into another, and let us resolve that nothing shall comfort them, but peace with God and peace with one another.

“ If anything should affect us, the great appearance of God should, wherein he hath put forth so much of his power, wisdom, love, and mercy. Is it not a mercy you have long desired and prayed for? And God hath this day returned your prayers, like *Noah's* dove, with an olive branch in the mouth. How long did our fathers sow in tears for this harvest, and God hath reserved the reaping time for us their children. And therefore *let us joy before him according to the joy in harvest.*

“ This day hath the Lord rolled away our reproach; for what hath been the reproach we have been filled with? Is it not that we have been a divided people, crumbling into factions and parties, filled with mutual animosities and jars, envying and hating one another? Now God hath brought us to *Gilgal*, for this day is the reproach rolled away; and shall not God have the glory of this?

“ You have done that, in this Agreement, that promises great advantage and comfort to our brethren abroad; it is like the beams of the sun, which diffuse light and heat to thousands at once. And what can please and rejoice you, who are by calling, by duty, by affection, men of public spirit and aims, more than to be made such a blessing to the whole interest of Christ through the nation?

“ In this union you have shewed a high conformity to Christ. He is all for union. There is a union between him and the Father, a union between him and the Spirit, a union between him and the human nature, a union between him and all believers.\*

“ Labour to manifest this union. If God hath made the *two sticks one*, let it appear that they are one. Make it evident by seeking each other's welfare; rejoice in the gifts, and graces, and successes of others, as if they were your own; contributing your counsels, assistance, sympathy, and prayers for the common good. When we live and act as they that have but one essence and interest, this makes the union manifest, and shews that we are in a sense *one*, as God and Christ are *one*.

“ Use all means to preserve this union. God hath made the two sticks one, and he looks you should preserve the oneness. You come hardly by it; but don't let it go; it hath cost many prayers to obtain it, and therefore we should spare no cost to preserve it. What is hardly got, should not be easily lost.†

“ All things in religion are reduced to one, that the people of God may be one, and abide one. Eph. iv. 4.

“ *There is one Spirit.* As all the natural members of the same body have but one and the same soul, so all the members of the mystical

\* Pp. 19, 20.

† P. 24.



body of Christ have one and the same Spirit ; one Spirit to enlighten and teach, one Spirit to sanctify, one Spirit to direct and lead.

“ *There is one Lord*, and that is the Lord Christ, whom we all worship and serve. And shall fellow-servants differ, that have the same Lord ? *Is Christ divided ?*”\*

“ Are not your names among the *angels*, who are to pour out the vials upon the earth ? For it is *the vengeance of the temple*, and the vials are in the hands of the angels that come out of the temple. And how must these vials be poured out ? By preaching the *everlasting Gospel*. And pray mind, the preaching of the everlasting Gospel is said to be the work but of *one angel*, (Rev. iv. 16,) and yet the pouring out the vials is the work of seven, to shew their unitedness in the Gospel, and cause of Christ against Antichrist.†

“ Do not impropriate Christ to any party. The apostle discovers another spirit, and more truly catholic, when he writes to this Church. 1 Cor. i. 2. *To the saints at Corinth, and to all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.*‡

“ See that your union be laid in Truth. That must have the first place ; *love the truth, and peace*. Union in errors, in false principles, is no better than a confederacy against Christ. That is a cursed accommodation, that is made to the disservice of religion ; because, while we thus make peace with men, we make a breach with God.

“ We are united to Christ by faith, but to one another by love, and we should be careful to strengthen both the bands, that neither of them be broken. Among the *Romans*, they had a temple dedicated *Jovi Depositorio*, because there they laid aside their quarrels and differences before they entered into the senate. Shall heathens lay aside their mutual jars for common good, and shall not the ministers of the Gospel do it much more for the Churches’ safety ?”§

This auspicious event was hailed with a unanimous response of grateful joy by ministers of both denominations, in all parts of the country, where similar associations were formed.

Mr. Samuel Chandler, a Presbyterian minister at Fareham, in Hampshire, published a small book, entitled, “ *The Country’s Concurrence with the London United Ministers in their late Heads of Agreement, shewing the Nature and Advantages of a General Union among Protestants*. In two Discourses delivered before an Assembly of Ministers, in the County of *Southampton*.” 1691.

Mr. Chandler, who had been invited by his brethren to

\* Pp. 21, 25.

† Pp. 27, 28.

‡ P. 29.

§ Pp. 30, 31.

preach before them on this occasion, thus mentions in the preface the general feeling which then prevailed—

“The late happy Union between two prevailing parties among us is a fit subject of joy and thankfulness. That differences, which have been managed with too much heat for so many years, should now be so happily composed, and the contending parties should mutually condescend and concur together in so fair an Agreement, is a blessing we have reason gratefully to acknowledge; that the Country should so readily and unanimously agree with their brethren in the City on the same terms, and throughout the *whole nation* there should be such a willing consent to lay aside those *distinguishing names* and terms which have hitherto so miserably divided us: these things afford sufficient matter for praise to that God, who rules the hearts of men, and stills the ragings of the people.”

He thus addresses his audience—“God hath indeed highly favoured us by his Providence, by now calming our spirits, removing our jealousies and misunderstandings one of another, and reconciling those differences which have unhappily divided us many years: so that now we can strengthen one another’s hands in the work of our Lord, and glory in the title of United Brethren. We are now come together solemnly to testify our thankfulness to God for this happy Union, which many of us have long sighed and prayed, and waited, and laboured for in vain.”\*

After exposing in a lively and pointed strain the “undue admiration of particular persons or parties,” reprov’d by the Apostle, 1 Cor. i. 12. and iii. 4, 5. which he applies to the conduct of those who exalt some ministers above others, on account of their excelling in certain natural endowments, or ministerial qualifications, he says—“We must consider they all preach the same Doctrine, and direct to the same way to Salvation.”†

“An hearty love to God will engage us to be at peace with the whole fraternity of Christians, and love them without dissimulation.

“Make the great design of religion yours, viz. the advancement of holiness, and recovery of the image of God in the souls of men. Remember, religion is not designed merely to fill your heads with airy notions, to tip your tongues for discourse, or enable you to talk plausibly for the truth; that it consists not in little speculative opinions, or ceremonious trifles; but the great design of it is to direct us in the government of our passions, subduing our lusts, and conquering the impediments that hinder our recovery and salvation. In a word, religion consists in a penitent return to God by Faith in Christ, and obedience to his Gospel.”‡

\* Pp. 3, 4.

† Pp. 30, 33, 34.

‡ Pp. 34, 35.

“Avoid extremes in disputable points. Every truth lies in the middle between two falsehoods, and he that goes far from one is apt to slip into the other. After all the confidence and boast of disputers, there will be uncertainty in lesser points, and when we travel in uncertain roads, 'tis best to choose the middle; here we may be sure to meet with charity and peace, and very probably truth in their company. The great occasion of our differences hath been, that men have looked so much at the evil of one extreme, as to forget the error on the other side; like an ignorant physician, who, to cure a man of a dead palsy, casts him into a phrenzy. I dare with some confidence affirm, that most of those disputes that are so hotly agitated among Protestants, are in the extremes, and consist more in words than things, because the curse of Babel hath so confounded our languages, that though our sentiments are much the same, we understand not one another's meaning. And if men would but hearken to calm dispassionate reason, they might soon find out such healing, reconciling principles, as would quickly make us one among ourselves, and a terror to our Romish adversaries. Let the apostle's counsel be in this sense therefore obeyed, Phil. iv. 5. *Let your moderation be known unto all men.*”\*

“Blessed be God that he hath in so great a measure healed our breaches, and thus far united us together. How happy would it be if this Union were yet more extensive—if the name of Reformed Christian were only known, and all those divided names laid aside whereby we have been unhappily distinguished! By mutual compliances and condescensions this is no impossible task.”†

The second discourse, addressed particularly to the assembled ministers, is from John xiii. 34. He thus explains verses 31, 32. in which our Saviour, to support the hearts of his disciples in the prospect of his speedy departure, tells them that he should be glorified, and God the Father in him, “i. e. that he should give great discoveries of his Deity, and God the Father would discover the unsearchable depths of his wisdom, inconceivable heights of his love, and infinite strictness of his holiness and justice by his death, and advance him straightway to the highest degrees of glory.”‡

“Christ alone paid down a complete satisfaction for our brethren and us. He had not the Spirit by measure, but the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him.||

“Our Christian love must resemble our Saviour's. It must be enlarged to all Saints—to the whole fraternity of Christians. To be partial in our love is a sign 'tis unsound; to make our own opinions the *shibboleth* to distinguish between a true and counterfeit Christian, is

\* Pp. 36—38.

† Pp. 41—43.

‡ P. 46.

|| P. 57.

very unreasonable. Where there is a Profession of the baptismal covenant, the Essentials of the Christian Faith, and a life in some measure answerable, we must love such as Christians, notwithstanding their mistakes and erroneous principles in lesser points. We justly condemn the Church of Rome for confining salvation to themselves, and damning all the world besides. Let us take heed how we condemn ourselves, by contracting the church of God into a narrower compass, lest we censoriously damn those whom Christ will save, and perhaps place on higher seats of glory than ourselves. We know who it was that said, 'Lord, I thank thee I am not as this publican,' when he was really in a far worse condition. Our love to a party must not blind our judgments, or pervert our affections as to all the rest. Keep up, therefore, an impartial, universal love to all professed Christians, as such, and hate a dividing spirit. Take heed how you stigmatize those with the name of Heretics who shall stand at the right hand of Christ, and take not up the devil's accursed employment, to become accusers of those that are really your brethren.\*

"Our love to one another must resemble Christ's love to us in the outward expressions of it:—1. In the intimacies of our friendship and familiarity with one another. Christ so loves all true Christians as to enter into the strictest bands of amity with them; he is nearly united to them, as their head and husband, and calls them his friends and his spouse; he is the head, and they are the members; the vine, and they are the branches; the foundation, and they are the building; the root, and they are the fruit. The communications of his grace, the quickening assistances and influences of his Spirit, are imparted to them; he writes his law in their hearts, and causeth them to run in the way of his commandments; sanctifies their natures, pardons their sins, prevailingly intercedes for them, and prepares them by grace for glory. He hath communion with them in his ordinances, familiarly converseth with them in his sacraments, and is continually fitting them for that happy fellowship with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which glorified saints enjoy. While he was on earth, he selected some few persons, prepared them by grace for his society, and then made them his familiar friends. To them he clearly revealed the mind and will of God; to them he unfolded the mysteries of his love, and commands of his Father; to them he explained what was spoken to others in parables. These he blessed with his heavenly discourses and pious instructions; with the special tokens of his love, and familiar expressions of his friendship. Indeed, he did entertain a *Judas* in his family, but he made a strict profession as well as the other disciples, and was not known to be hypocritical by any but Christ himself; and had not the wisdom of God designed by his means to

\* Pp. 62—64.

bring about the great work of our Redemption, no doubt this son of perdition would have been discarded and disowned.\*

“2. In our hearty prayers one for another.—Christ was very earnest in his prayers for true believers. They were the peculiar objects of his love, and purchase of his death, and therefore he prays for them in a peculiar manner: for Peter, he prays for strengthening, confirming grace (Luke xxii. 31); and he put up a famous prayer for his disciples, and all that should believe on him, (John xvii.) that they might persevere in the faith, live in unity, increase in grace, and at last be translated to heaven, and abide with him in glory. And he hath laid a special obligation on us to do likewise. Hence, in that excellent form and directory of prayer, Mat. vi. 9, he teaches us to say, ‘Our Father,’ intimating that if we would gain acceptance for ourselves, we must come to God as in union with Christ and his universal church. Our prayers must not be only for ourselves, but for the whole church of God throughout the world. We must hold communion with all Christians in faith, and love, and an holy profession thereof; and while absent in body, must be as present with them in spirit; and still beg of God for them a freedom from the same spiritual evils, and enjoyment of the same spiritual privileges, we would desire for ourselves.†

“3. In forgiving one another.—Christ so loved us, as to forgive all the injuries and affronts we have offered to him. Pardon of sin is the great purchase of his death: and though our sins be more numerous than the hairs of our head, and exceed the sands of the sea for multitude, yet, if we sincerely repent of them, we may be assured they shall be forgiven.‡

“4. In our alms and bounty to the necessitous.—Those who have a fruitless love to others, have but a fruitless faith to themselves.§

“5. In our counsels and admonitions.—’Tis not only the duty of Ministers, but of every private Christian, in his station, to counsel and instruct his brethren, to inform the ignorant, and seek their conversion; tell them their duty and danger, and shew them how they may flee from the wrath to come. And it will be their wisdom and interest thus to win souls to Christ, and save sinners from death and hell. Prov. xi. 30; James v. 20.||

“7. In dying for one another.—The greatest testimony of Christ’s love was his dying for us. John xv. 13. Rom. v. 8. 1 John iii. 16. If Christ, who was so much exalted above us in glory and majesty, did lay down his life for us, much more ought we to die for our brethren, who are of the same mould by nature, partakers of the same precious faith by grace, and heirs of the same inheritance in glory. If Christ died for enemies and strangers, slaves to Satan, and rebels against Heaven, surely we ought not to account it hard to die for

\* Pp. 71—73. † Pp. 76, 77. ‡ P. 79. § Pp. 81, 82. || Pp. 81, 85.

friends, linked to us by the nearest bonds of union, members of the same body, and belonging to the same glorious Head. The great instance wherein we are to lay down our lives for our brethren, is, when we are called to seal the truth with our blood.”\*

He concludes with an address to his ministerial brethren, of which the following is a portion :—

“ Let us now, therefore, take up an unanimous resolution, that we will live together as United Brethren.

“ While we all profess the same holy religion, worship God after the same manner, and pursue the same design of winning souls to Christ, why should we be angry or displeased if perhaps we have not the same sentiments on some lesser matters of difficulty, any more than because we are not of the same age, stature, or complexion ? †

“ The apostle Paul could say, that though some preached Christ out of envy and strife (Phil. i. 15, 18.), yet Christ was preached ; and therein he did rejoice, yea, and would rejoice. We all preach Christ, and, I am persuaded, none of us with contentious spirits. Let us therefore rejoice in one another’s success in the work of the ministry ; and make it our business to strengthen one another’s hands in the service of our Lord. . . . As we have begun to do thus, let us hold on, that our Union together may be for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, and enlargement of the Gospel, and an earnest and happy presage of a yet larger and more extensive Union among all the faithful Ministers of Christ throughout the land, and (if it be God’s will) throughout the whole Christian world.

“ The plague of uncharitableness hath dangerously infected the generality of Christians, and therefore it concerns every messenger of peace to cry aloud, and persuade men to Love and Union.” ‡

A General Meeting of the ministers of Devonshire was held this year at Topsham, of which the eminent Mr. John Flavel was chosen moderator, which office (we are told) he the more readily accepted of, that he might have the better opportunity to carry on that blessed uniting work, which he brought to so good an issue, that the Ministers there declared their full satisfaction with the *Heads of Agreement*, and their thankfulness to their brethren in *London*, who had promoted this great and good design.§

\* Pp. 90, 91.

† Pp. 92, 93.

‡ Pp. 94—96.

§ Mr. Flavel, as his writings clearly shew, was a decided Calvinist, though a zealous opponent of Antinomianism ; but eminent for candour and charity. “ He was of a peaceable and healing spirit, becoming an ambassador of the Prince of peace. He had a real love to, and kept a good correspondence with, those in

He wrote a letter to an eminent minister in London, giving him an account of these proceedings, on the morning of the day on which he suddenly departed to his rest. He had previously composed a sermon to be preached at Taunton, at the earnest and unanimous desire of several United Brethren of *Gloucester, Dorset, Somerset, and Devonshire*, at their meeting, to be held there September 2d, the same year. From this discourse, as it afterwards appeared in print, I shall present the reader with a few extracts.

It opens with the following words—"This great and solemn Assembly (met upon a greater and more solemn account,) brings to my mind those words, (Isa. xlix. 20, 21.) &c.

"How many truths have we to study! Yea, we must fight in defence of the truths we preach as well as study them to paleness, and preach them unto faintness.\*

"Remember, all souls are rated at one value in your Master's book, and your Redeemer paid as much for the one as for the other. †

"Many of us have cause to bless the Lord, and greatly to rejoice in his goodness this day, who enabled us to be steadfast and unmoveable in the trials that have past over us; and when the great earthquake shook down our liberties, our estates, and made our hearts to shake, yet our resolutions for God and his truth stood firm and unshaken. Our hearts turned not back, nor did our steps decline; though we were broken in the place of dragons, and covered with the shadow of death." ‡

"The greatest part of our congregations are poor, ignorant, and

whom he beheld the image of Christ, though in some controverted things their judgments and practices differed from his; hoping at last that he should meet them in the same heaven, where all their mistakes should be rectified, and their differences adjusted and composed. He was even transported with joy, when, by a letter from a reverend minister in *London*, he received the good news of the happy Agreement of the ministers in that city, who in some lesser points were of different apprehensions, and went under different denominations; hoping that it would have a good influence upon the whole kingdom, who having so fair a copy given them, would endeavour to write after it. He did frequently bless the Lord for that mercy, both in public and in private, and even melted into tears of joy at the mentioning of it, saying, God had herein answered the prayers that his people had been putting up to him these many years. When he saw the *Heads of Agreement*, which had been assented to and subscribed by the London Ministers, he told a friend that was with him, that he could now take up the words of old Simeon, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace*. He zealously endeavoured to promote the same blessed Union and Agreement among the ministers of this county (*Devon*), which was the last work that God thought fit to employ him in before he took him to himself."—Life prefixed to his Remains, 12mo. 1691.

\* Flavel's Remains, 12mo. 1691, pp. 82, 83.      † P. 84.      ‡ P. 85.

unregenerated people, that know neither their *misery*, nor their *remedy*. This will direct us to the great doctrines of *Conviction*, *Regeneration*, and *Faith*; and make us sit with solicitous minds in our studies, pondering thus in our hearts, Lord, what course shall we take, and what words shall we choose, that may convey the sense of their sin and danger, with the fulness and necessity of Christ, into their hearts !\*

“ And why, my brethren, do we think that God hath commissioned us, rather than *angels*, to be his ambassadors ? was it not, among other reasons, for this, because we, having been under the same condemnation and misery ourselves, and felt both the terrors and consolations of the Spirit, (which angels experimentally know not,) might thereby be enabled to treat with sinners more feelingly and affectionately, in a way more accommodate to them, and therefore more apt to move and win them?†

“ As to our *Brethren* and *Fellow-workers* in the Lord ; prudence will dictate and enjoin it upon us, that by the firmest Union with them, we make their gifts and graces as useful as is possible, for the furtherance and advancement of our great and difficult work. We cannot be ignorant how much Satan hath gained, and Christ’s interest hath sensibly lost, by those unhappy divisions and alienations amongst brethren and fellow-labourers in the work of the Lord.”‡

“ And as prudence directs us into the way of our profit and comfort by this more private improvement of our gifts and graces, so into a more excellent way by a *General Union* and coalition with all our brethren farther distant in place from us. It calls upon us to bury and forget henceforth the factious names of distinction growing out of our different apprehensions about smaller disciplinary points. How many fervent prayers have been poured out ! How many excellent *Irenicums* have been written by those excellent ministers that are now at perfect unity in heaven ! Though *they* did not, yet I hope *we* and *our children* shall reap the blessed fruits of those pious endeavours. God hath spoken with a strong hand to our pious and prudent brethren, in and about the great City of this kingdom. They have most wisely and seasonably projected this great and glorious design : they have followed it close with unwearied diligence, admirable patience, Christian humility and condescension ; and, by the good hand of the Lord with them, have brought it at last to a comfortable issue. The happy result of their fervent prayers, and frequent brotherly consults, (all praise to the God of love and peace for it !) are now in our hands in those blessed sheets, called *Heads of Agreement* ; wherein God hath signally helped them to evidence their wisdom in the choice of words, and their humility and charity in mutual and necessary concessions. They have, by the mouth of an *eminent brother*, (whose praise is in the Gospel, and whose hand hath eminently assisted in this service,) cheerfully offered up their praises to *Jehovah-Shalom*, for

\* P. 93.

† P. 97.

‡ P. 101.



making the two sticks of *Judah* and *Ephraim* to become one stick in his own hand. And now, brethren, they wait, yea, give me leave to say, Christ waits, as well as they, for our explicit consent and cheerful suffrages," pp. 104—106.

These extracts are pervaded by a truly Christian spirit, noble, generous, catholic, and comprehensive; but they are, at the same time, most remote from latitudinarian indifference to doctrinal truth, or a disregard of the great vital principles of Christianity. These, on the contrary, are prominent and conspicuous through the whole. But it is not so much for the purpose of exhibiting this characteristic that I have introduced them, as to give the reader an opportunity of judging, from the evangelical strain, the earnest tone, the affectionate style of address exhibited in them, what manner of men those were, on both sides, who took a leading part on this interesting occasion; how completely they were agreed in sentiment and feeling, as well as in opinion, with reference to the peculiar doctrines of revelation—the Trinity—the ruin of mankind by Sin—the work of Redemption accomplished by the Son of God—the work of Regeneration and progressive Sanctification by the Holy Spirit—Justification, or pardon and acceptance with God, by grace, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ;—and how paramount was the importance attached by them to these great doctrines. The immediate successors of the ejected Presbyterian clergy did not indeed possess either the fire and energy, or the unction and pathos of Baxter, the most eminent individual, perhaps, among that illustrious band of confessors; but they were men of kindred spirit, and seem to have looked up to him as their model and pattern. Among the Congregational ministers of London at this time, it must be confessed there were a few narrow and contracted in their views, rigid and austere in their adherence to human systems of doctrine; and although conscientious in "contending earnestly" for what they regarded as "the faith once delivered to the saints," in reference especially to the great doctrine of justification, insisted too much on exact accordance with the terms and phrases of a systematic theology, in the explication of it.

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DOCTRINAL DIFFERENCES AMONG THE LONDON MINISTERS—DIS-  
CLAIMER OF ANTINOMIANISM BY THE INDEPENDENTS—CALVINISM  
OF THE PRESBYTERIANS—NEW LECTURE ESTABLISHED BY THEM  
AT SALTERS' HALL—NOTICE OF SEVERAL LECTURERS THERE—  
CHARACTER OF THE REV. JOHN HOWE, AND EXTRACTS FROM HIS  
WRITINGS.

THE occasion of the unhappy disputes which arose soon after the solemn ratification of the Union, was a republication in 1690 (4to.) of the sermons of Dr. Tobias Crisp, a puritan divine, generally considered as belonging to the Antinomian school. To the sermons which had already appeared in print, the doctor's son, by whom this new edition was published, added several which were copied from his manuscripts, and a testimonial, or attestation, of these having been faithfully transcribed, was prefixed, to which the names of several of the United Ministers were appended. It will not be necessary to give a particular account of this lamentable controversy, which, to some of the parties, was most disgraceful, and to the entire body deeply injurious. The reader's attention must, however, be directed to the real subject in debate. The question about Subscription did not arise, even incidentally; neither was it, as one of these writers has insinuated, a dispute concerning Election or Predestination; nor, indeed, about any of the five points in difference between Arminians and Calvinists. The doctrinal questions involved in it related to the mode and terms of Justification—the subject before adverted to, as forming the chief theological difference between the two bodies previously to the Union. This controversy was carried on for some time with great violence, on the part of a few individuals among the London ministers, and led, in 1694, to an open rupture among the preachers of the Merchants' Lecture at Pinner's Hall, and to the establishment of a new lecture at Salters' Hall. Of the six lecturers who officiated in succession, every Tuesday morning, four had, from its institution in 1672, been Presbyterians, the other two Independents. Whatever might be the peculiar opinions of individuals on some points, there is ample evidence to shew that the entire body was clear from the imputation of all serious doctrinal error.

One of the lecturers at this time, Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Daniel Williams, founder of the library in Redcross Street, soon became a leading divine among the Presbyterians.

A few of the more rigid Independents, who "had opposed the Union at first," retained their hostility after it was established. Two of them, Dr. Chauncy and Mr. Mather, (the latter of whom Dr. Williams charges with being "unwearied in hindering and breaking that blessed Union which promised so much good,")\* brought charges of highly erroneous doctrine against him, for some positions advanced in two sermons, preached by him at Pinner's Hall, and in a book published in 1692, in reply to Dr. Crisp, entitled "Gospel Truth stated and vindicated." Dr. Toulmin, in his "Historical View of the State of the Protestant Dissenters in England, and of the Progress of Free Inquiry and Religious Liberty, from the Revolution to the Accession of Queen Anne,"† gives an account of this publication, and tells us, that "having explained and stated the case, the author confirmed the truth, which was opposed to a specific error, by the rule of faith received by both sides. To the direct proofs were added corroborating testimonies from the approved Catechisms and Confessions, both of the Presbyterian and Independent bodies, viz. those of the Assembly at Westminster, of the Synod of New England, and of the Congregational elders at the Savoy, besides those of such particular authors as were generally esteemed orthodox."‡ Among these Dr. Owen is frequently cited. The chief topics involved in this discussion were the following points connected with the way and means of Justification and Salvation.

Imputation of the sins of men to Christ.

Change of persons between Christ and the Elect.

Conditionality of the Covenant of Grace.

Nature of saving Faith.

Promises and threatenings contained in the Gospel, and qualifications required in order to obtain an interest in its blessings.

Necessity of confession and repentance, in order to pardon.

Necessity of holiness and perseverance unto salvation.

\* Dr. Williams's Works, vol. iv. p. xii.

† 8vo. 1814.

‡ P. 202.

Dr. Chauncy and Mr. Mather were inclined to favour some of the views taken by Dr. Crisp on these points, though they did not profess to adopt his entire system, or to hold many of his opinions; but they wrote with much warmth and bitterness against Dr. Williams.

In 1692, the United Ministers in London, who had been often previously consulted by their brethren in the country, in reference to "the erroneous principles and irregular practices" of Mr. Richard Davis, a minister in Northamptonshire, published a brief Account and Testimony, that (say they) "we may not be wanting in our faithfulness and zeal for the truth of Christ, and for that peace and order among his people, which is so strictly enjoined by him; nor be esteemed approvers of those delusions and extravagancies, whereby souls are endangered, divisions highly fomented, and our present liberty abused, to the hurt and reproach of all of us as Dissenters." They then proceed to bear their testimony against some of the errors which he propagated, and "declare them repugnant to the Gospel, as also to the doctrine of the *Church of England*, and other *Confessions* agreeable to the Gospel, whereto they had assented," &c. The errors enumerated are of the Libertine or Antinomian class. Among his "unchristian practices," were "his sending forth preachers unfit for the ministry, and unapproved by the neighbouring ministers; and his wickedly railing at most of the orthodox laborious ministers." They afterwards declare "that he never was, nor is esteemed, of the number of the United Brethren."\*

In 1693 was printed a tract, entitled "The Agreement in Doctrine among the Dissenting Ministers in London, subscribed December 16, 1692," in which, after noticing the differences which had arisen, occasioned by the books of Mr. Williams and Mr. Chauncy, &c. and entering into some explanations as to the intention of those who subscribed their names in approbation of the books and papers, which had served rather to inflame than to allay the controversy, they proceed to declare—"That in order to the more effectual composing of matters in controversie, we all of us, having referred ourselves to the *Holy Scriptures*, and the *Doctrinal*

\* Calamy's Historical Additions, pp. 512—514.

*Articles of the Church of England, the Westminster and Savoy Confessions, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms*, do subscribe these following propositions, as what do most fully provide against the *Arminian, Antinomian, Socinian, and Popish* errors; and shall always be content, that any sermons or books of ours be interpreted by the said Articles and Confessions; desiring all others, if they meet with any expressions from any of us, that are to them of doubtful signification, they would judge of them, and interpret them by the Holy Scripture, and [the] said Articles and Confessions."

The propositions are arranged under nine heads, and the whole are decidedly Calvinistic. I will subjoin one as a specimen.

### III. *Of Christ the Mediator.*

"1. It pleased God in his eternal purpose to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man, the Prophet, Priest, and King, the Head and Saviour of the Church, the heir of all things, and Judge of the world, unto whom he did from all eternity give a people to be his seed, and to be by him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.

"2. The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, which he, through the eternal Spirit, once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father, and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven for all those whom the Father hath given unto him.

"3. To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption, he doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same, making intercession for them, and revealing unto them, in and by the word, the mysteries of salvation, effectually persuading them, by his Spirit, to believe and obey, and governing their hearts by his word and Spirit, overcoming all their enemies by his Almighty power and wisdom, in such manner and ways as are most consonant to his wonderful and unsearchable dispensations."<sup>\*</sup>

At the end they subjoin—"Though we have selected these *Propositions*, as conceiving them most accommodated to some points at this time controverted; yet we profess to have an equal respect to all other the main parts of doctrine, contained in the forementioned Articles, Confession, and Catechisms, as judging them agreeable to the word of God."

December 16, 1692.—This day the brethren, who endeavoured to

accommodate this controversy, did, with Mr. *Williams*, Mr. *Chauncy*, and those other five brethren who with him objected against Mr. *Williams's* book, subscribe to this agreement and these doctrinal propositions." [Seventeen names are subscribed, containing, besides the above mentioned, those of Mr. *Howe* and nine others, most of them Presbyterians.]

"On December, 19—This expedient was considered by the *United Ministers*, who unanimously declared their approbation of it."\*

But, alas ! peace was not restored. There seemed to be a determination, on the part of a few individuals, to embroil, if possible, the whole body of the united ministers in London. Towards the close of 1694, the rupture among the lecturers at Pinner's Hall took place. An overture for peace, on the part of the portion which included the Presbyterians, was made shortly after, with a view to the satisfaction of those who had left them, and also of those who from the first had refused to join them. After stating that both these "pretended nothing for their separation, but that there were erroneous persons in the Union,"—they add, "To gratify them as to this, the persons deputed by us admitted such provision as pleased those brethren, against whatever errors they suspected any of our number guilty of." Of a paper then drawn up, "the former part, which (they say) was brought to our meeting, as what would satisfy the dissenters if assented to by us"—shall be inserted :—

"We, the *United Ministers* in and about *London*, considering of a way whereby to preserve the *Union*, and prevent any mistakes, and remove any prejudices that may arise amongst us to interrupt the foresaid *Union*, do declare, that we still adhere to the Terms thereof, and do still submit to the Holy Scriptures as the rule of faith and practice, and do own the doctrinal part of those commonly called the *Articles of the Church of England*, or the *Confession*, shorter and larger *Catechisms* compiled by the *Assembly at Westminster*, or the *Savoy Confession* ; and do renounce, and testify against, all opinions and doctrines dissonant therefrom ; as, for instance, among many others :

[1.] "That there is no definite number of persons elected from all eternity, whom God will by his appointed means certainly save, and bring to eternal life ; leaving the rest, who fall under a just con-

\* Dr. *Williams's Works*, vol. iv. p. 327.

damnation for their original and actual sins, especially for their neglect and contempt of the means of salvation.

[2.] "That Christ died equally for all men, not intending the final salvation of some more than others.

[3.] "That men have it in their own power, by the use of the natural faculties of their reason and will, unassisted by the special light and grace of the Holy Ghost, to perform all that is necessary to salvation; or that his special efficacious light and grace is not necessary to their conversion, perseverance, and final salvation.

[4.] "That any of them whom God hath foreknown, predestinated, and called effectually according to the purpose of his grace, shall fall away, either totally, or so as not to be finally glorified.

[5.] "That faith, repentance, a holy conversation, or any act or work whatever done by us, or wrought by the Spirit of God in us, are any part of that Righteousness for the sake of which, or on the account whereof, God doth justify any man, or entitle him to eternal life."

The document, after enumerating several (chiefly Antinomian) errors "on the other side," thus concludes:

"We have thought it our duty to bear our testimony against all these erroneous opinions, or any other contrary to the plain tenor of the Gospel of God. And we do further protest against any design of undermining one another in any matter of church government, but do heartily desire to maintain communion with each other, according to the *Heads of Agreement* we have assented to. And if any thing hath been done or spoken by any of us, through mistake or inadvertency, that may cause any just offence to the prejudice of the said Union, we are ready, upon better information, to rectify the same; still desiring and mutually resolving a brotherly forbearance towards one another, in any lesser points wherein we may differ."

"Our concern for *Union*," say the writers, "will appear, if it be considered that (to the best of our knowledge) we retained all the very words sent by them to us, as a guard against each of the errors of which they suspected any of us."

This paper was unanimously agreed to, and forwarded January 7, 1694-5.\*

Yet these are the men who, according to the writers now under review, cared nothing about doctrinal truth or error, who looked with cold indifference upon theological opinions of the most opposite character; and this was at the end

\* Dr. Williams's Works, vol. iv. pp. 329—334.

of the very year of glorious emancipation, (1694,) during which the English Presbyterians cast off their ignoble shackles, and abjured for ever all kinds of doctrinal tests and confessions, after having established a new lecture, at which they might enjoy full liberty to divulge *any* opinions, and whence they might securely propagate tenets the most obnoxious and offensive to the feelings of all Christian communities then in existence ! This overture failed of producing the desired effect, and most of the Congregational ministers withdrew, and joined the separate meetings of those who had been decided opponents of the Union. Their reason for so acting does not appear; and the whole affair, so far as their conduct is concerned, is clothed with an air of mystery.

In 1696 another attempt was made, on the part of the United Brethren, (for by that title the Presbyterian and few remaining Congregational who continued then to meet and act together were still called,) for an accommodation with “such as had left the Union.” A proposal (called “the Third Paper”) was, after mature consideration, unanimously assented to, and forwarded, of which a large portion shall be inserted:—

“Whereas some unhappy differences have arisen among us, principally about the doctrine of Justification, as set forth in *Mr. Williams’s* book, entitled *Gospel Truth stated*, to which several of our names are prefixed; we being willing to give all reasonable satisfaction therein, for the removing the present and preventing all future differences, which will otherwise tend to the dishonour of God, disquiet of his churches, and danger of souls, do hereby declare our judgment concerning the same :

“That we adhere to our former approbation of the doctrinal *Articles* of the *Church of England*, or the *Confession* of Faith compiled by the *Assembly at Westminster*, or that at the *Savoy*, as agreeable to the word of God; and particularly to the *Articles* collected by us out of the *Confession* with the *Catechisms* compiled by the same *Assembly*, printed 1693. And further we declare, that if any shall express himself disagreeably thereto, in any momentous points of doctrine, we will, with brotherly candour and kindness, endeavour to give and receive just satisfaction therein; bearing with one another’s infirmities and different sentiments in matters of lesser weight; not contending about *logical* or *philosophical* terms, or mere *human forms of speech*; nor judging



it reasonable or just to charge upon any, such consequences of any expression or opinion of his, which he himself shall disown.

They then proceed to declare as to the special matters in difference, viz. :

“ I. Concerning *Justification*. That although the express word of God do assert the necessity of *Regeneration* to our entering into the kingdom of God ; and requires *Repentance*, that our sins may be blotted out ; and *Faith in Christ*, that we may be justified ; and *holiness* of heart and life, without which we cannot see God ; yet that *none of these*, or any work done by men, or wrought by the Spirit of God in them, is, under any denomination whatsoever, *any part of the Righteousness*, for the sake, or on the account whereof, God doth pardon, justify, or accept sinners, or entitle them to eternal life ; that being only *the Righteousness of Christ* without them, imputed to them, and received by Faith alone.

“ II. Of a *Commutation of Persons* between Christ and us. As we are to consider our Lord Jesus Christ in his obedience and sufferings, as God and man invested with the office of Mediator ; so it is apparent this commutation of persons with us was not *natural*, in respect of either nature. — But it is to be understood in a *legal* or *judicial* sense, (as we may call it,) viz. He, by agreement between the Father and him, *came into our room and stead*, not to repent and believe for us, which the Gospel requires of us as our duty, (though he hath undertaken the elect shall in due time be enabled thereto;) but to answer for our violation of the law of works. *He being made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21.

“ III. Of God's being *pleased* or *displeased* with Christ, as standing and suffering in our stead. We judge that God was *always pleased* with Christ, both in his person, and in the execution of all his offices (which is expressed most particularly in that of his priestly, John x. 17, 18. *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, &c.*) and was no otherwise *displeased*, than as having a dispassionate will to inflict upon him the punishment of our sins, which he had undertaken to bear, that God might, without injury to his justice or honour, pardon and save penitent believers, for his Satisfaction, and Intercession founded thereon.”

The Paper thus concludes—“ And we do declare, that whosoever shall be found to express themselves in their preaching or writing agreeably to *this Paper*, and to the mentioned *Articles* or *Confessions*, we shall esteem them to deliver the sincere Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ; and it shall be remote from us to oppose or reflect upon, but we shall to our utmost encourage and give countenance to one another's ministry therein.”\*

This paper was accompanied by a letter, expressed in the most affectionate terms, in which they say—

“All the light that we have received about matters in difference between us hath been from a reverend Brother, who told us that, by conference with some who forbear to come to our meetings, he understood that they apprehended there are those in our *Union*, who have sentiments about the doctrine of *Justification*, different from the common faith of all orthodox Protestants, and so dissonant from the Holy Scriptures and the Confessions, which have been owned and approved by us; and that if there were sufficient evidence and assurance given them, that the body of the *United Ministers* would approve themselves sound, clear, and stedfast in that most weighty and important doctrine, (which we all acknowledge to be *Articulus stantis vel cadentis Ecclesie*,) they would then maintain all brotherly communion with us.”

The letter then proceeds—“When this was notified to us, we presently conceived great and good hopes, that all jealousies might be easily removed, and that a redintegration of affections would immediately follow. And what should hinder? For if you do attentively and deliberately weigh what is asserted in the article of *Justification* in the enclosed paper, (which was unanimously agreed unto, after open reading, and that upon several days,) we are confident that it will evidently and undeniably appear that we perfectly agree with our brethren in the evangelical doctrine of *Justification*, even in the very phrases and modes of expression.

“Our agreement in the doctrine of *Justification*, which was as the test and cement of our *Union*, being so happily established and fixed; we shall need to say but little touching the other two points mentioned in the enclosed paper, which (as we think) are so clearly and candidly stated, that we believe (as we suppose upon sure and certain grounds) there will be nothing remaining (upon that account) to obstruct our entire and hearty *Union*.” Pp. 342, 343.

After referring to some who sought occasion to reproach them, and to hinder the success or acceptableness of their ministry, they add—

‘But we trust the Lord will blast their designs, and frustrate their expectations, by enlightening our minds to receive and hold fast all truths, and especially those which are *fundamental*, and will, by his grace most sweetly and effectually draw our hearts to love as brethren,” &c. —Pp. 342—344.

They conclude with the following pathetic appeal:—“That these blessed ends may be the more effectually pursued, we

do (with all importunity and fervour) beseech you to return, and frequent our meetings as ye have done formerly: that we may join with you there in your holy prayers, be assisted with your wholesome counsels, and be refreshed with your much-desired society; that we may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen." This letter was signed, October 27, 1696, by the Moderator.

Do we here discover the slightest indication of that equal and impartial disregard of all theological opinions, ascribed to the English Presbyterians? Do not these papers, on the contrary, contain abundant evidence of firm adherence and zealous attachment to doctrinal truth? Whence otherwise the anxiety which the compilers of them manifest, the pains which they take to clear themselves from the imputation of holding erroneous tenets, on any important point of the Christian system?

The answer sent to this letter was brief and unsatisfactory, and shewed no disposition to conciliate,—merely referring to another paper, which had been drawn up some months previously.

Whether the rupture among the lecturers at Pinner's Hall, the subsequent withdrawal of the greater number of the Congregational Ministers from the meetings of the United Ministers, and their refusal to return, was equivalent to a dissolution of the Union, so far as those of the two denominations belonging to London were concerned, is a point I do not consider it necessary to discuss; but, whatever might be the fact, there appears no trace of any formal act of dissolution.\* At all events, it could not be followed by a separation among the United Ministers in all parts of the country, unless the London Congregational Ministers exercised authoritative control over those in the country, or the latter thought proper to follow their bad example. To any such right or power, they never pretended; and had the body called United Ministers been disposed to interfere, they, being chiefly Presbyterians, would rather, it may be presumed, have encouraged and promoted the continuance of that ministerial concord and brotherly association among their country brethren, which they took so much pains to restore in London.

But to pursue the course of events in connexion with this unhappy controversy—

In September, 1697, the United Ministers requested their committee to notice two publications, and to prepare an answer to the charges contained in them. The Answer was not published in their name, for a reason which Dr. Williams particularly states; yet he says, that “the doctrines therein acknowledged are as much their common sentiments as if the Answer had been published in the name of the body.” Some extracts shall be given from this publication. In the preface they say—

“Had the charge contained only small mistakes, or *lesser errors*, Christian prudence might forbid an answer. But when they publish us guilty of such destructive opinions, as, they say, subvert the doctrine of Christ’s Satisfaction; yea, and make it impossible; and this, not as rash censurers, but pretending to cite our own paper for their charge,—a vindication is necessary, unless we ought to prostitute our ministry, betray the truth, lie under the brand of heretical opinions, induce others by our example to entertain such errors, and confirm those who are already infected. Had the accusation been still confined to *some particular Brethren*, our practice hitherto may convince the world we had not *as a body* set forth this Vindication. But when the authors of the Report, &c. accuse all who sent the *Third Paper*;\* that is, the body of the *United Brethren* in and about *London*; nothing short of our own public testimony can be sufficient to declare what our principles are, or acquit us from holding those horrid errors they so confidently as well as falsely ascribe unto us.

“With this necessitated vindication of ourselves and ministry, we think it incumbent on us to warn all persons, especially such of you as stand more peculiarly related to us, that you *be not shaken in mind*, but that you remain *steadfast in the faith* in this time, when seducers not only abound, but, under various disguises, are so unusually active and successful, to the reproach of Christianity, and the apparent danger of the souls seduced by them. Lament with us, to see all revealed Religion exposed by some, the Godhead and Satisfaction of Christ our blessed Redeemer denied by others, and doctrines which have a direct tendency to Libertinism espoused by too many. All which, with the residue of the great errors at this time propagated, do (how-

\* Which they afterwards describe as “that which the *United Brethren* sent as a means of *reunion* to those who had left the Union.” A considerable portion of it will be found, pp. 80, 81, ante.

ever inconsistent they seem,) jointly contribute to the subverting or the true Religion, and threaten misery to these kingdoms.

“And as we would excite your godly zeal for the truths and laws of Christ, against opinions subverting the foundations of faith, and militating against practical godliness; so, with equal concern, we must exhort you to *have fervent charity* towards all Christians, and to walk in peace with all who call upon the name of the Lord out of a pure heart. Notwithstanding differences in lesser matters, *whereunto we have attained, let us all walk by the same rule*; waiting with mutual forbearance till *God shall reveal* those things to such who, at present, are *otherwise minded* than ourselves.”\*

Referring to the doctrinal propositions printed in 1693, called “An Agreement in Doctrine,” subscribed by both parties, after quoting the passage which describes them as “most fully providing against the *Arminian, Antinomian, Socinian, and Popish* errors,” &c., they add, “Here was declared a full provision against those respective errors. And is it not strange that now such phrases and words must be the standard of orthodoxy, which neither this *Agreement*, the *Church of England*, the *Assembly’s*, nor the Confession of any church require?”† They were charged in one of these pamphlets, entitled *A Report*, &c., with denying “a commutation or change of persons, which, (say they,) in the *Third Paper*, we had fully asserted in opposition to Socinianism, but, (they add,) we say little of it in our *Letter*, where we have enlarged on Justification; because, for several years, the *Dissenters* [the brethren so called] pretended all their great quarrel was about that doctrine. And may we not justly grieve that, for our industry in clearing ourselves beyond all their challenges as to this, we should be *hereticated* by this Report, in the new controversy started by Mr. *Lobb*?”‡

The author of the publication just quoted had declared, that the cause of the divisions was the United Ministers’ contending for *Socinian* errors against Christ’s Satisfaction. The particular charge alleged was, that “there is such a wrong description given of a *change of person* in the *Third Paper*, as perverts the doctrine of Satisfaction, and renders it impossible.”§

\* Works, vol. iv. pp. 317-320.

† Ibid. p. 326.

‡ Pp. 363, 364.

§ P. 364.

This was certainly an important point. While granting that "Christ became a sin-offering, and in our stead subject to the punishments which, by the law, sinners deserved, that we might be delivered;" they deny that Christ put himself into *our state and condition*, as vile offenders, destitute of a righteousness entitling to eternal life, so as actually to become himself *a sinful person*, which they justly denominate "a horrid position."\* In a word, they admit a commutation of persons, but not a change of person. They say, "all Christ's sufferings as a priest, were his sufferings as one mediating for sinners, and not as one become himself a sinner."† In answer to the remark from the other side, that if the thing they contend for be granted them, they would not quarrel about the term, they say—instead of complaining of a disrespect to fifty or sixty ministers, we'll desire all our brethren were as temperate; which would end all quarrels about *human words*, when the *sense* is granted," and take occasion to animadvert on their opponent's stiffly contending for a set of phrases, notwithstanding their "orthodox explications."‡

In vindicating Dr. Williams from the charge of agreeing with Socinians, they say :

"The *Racovian Catechism* in the *Amsterdam* edition, and not only modern Socinians, affirm, *Christ died in our stead*; and Socinus, Crellius, and others, asserted a *change of persons* between Christ and us; and the sense in which the first take *dying in our stead*, is as metaphorical and improper, as the last do take a *change of persons* in. But if our *Reporter* finds a Socinian to use a phrase explained in an ill sense by themselves, and others make use of that phrase in a contrary sense never so expressly, his way is presently to charge upon them the use of that phrase in the Socinian sense. After all he hath said to make the stress of our cause against the Socinians to depend upon the terms *change of persons*, &c., an insight into that controversy would convince him, that there are other things which do far more certainly *define* that controversy about the satisfaction; viz. Was Christ, in his death, an expiatory Sacrifice? Did he make atonement to the justice of

\* Works, vol. iv. pp. 365, 366, 369. The words insisted upon were, *he took upon him the person of sinners*. The United Ministers admit that his sufferings were endured as the punishment of our sins, and that he died in our room and stead, (*vice nostra & loco nostro*.) p. 371.

† Ib. p. 367.

‡ Ib. p. 369.

God? Did Christ endure the punishment of our sins? &c. All these *Mr. Williams*, in Gospel Truth, asserts.

They quote the following passage from that book:

‘Our sins were imputed to Christ, with respect to the guilt thereof, so that he, by the Father’s appointment, and his own consent became obliged, as mediator, to bear the punishment of our sins; and he did bear those punishments, to the full satisfaction of justice, and to our actual remission, when we believe.’

“The *Reporter* seems not to distinguish between a *Surrogation*, upon which an innocent person expiates another’s crime, and his becoming the very sinning criminal.\*

Speaking of *unscriptural words*, they say—“It is matter of grief to us, that in opposition to the preface of both papers *law terms* and *human forms of speech*, in doctrines so fully expressed in the Gospel, and capable of being expressed in the words used and appointed by the Holy Ghost, should be made *engines of division* among persons who agree in the sense of such phrases, and yet dare not say that God designed to limit or extend his revelations by what such terms may signify in human laws or usages; especially when they need explications and limitations to prevent what is grossly erroneous.” [Then follow some remarks on the phrase ‘Christ took upon him the person of sinners.’] “But the Churches of Christ have been wiser than to insert such phrases into their *Confessions*, knowing it would confound the minds and perplex the consciences of Christians in points of greatest concernment to their Salvation.

“The vindication of ourselves from a printed charge so severe, (as the perverting, denying, and making the Satisfaction of Christ impossible,) is so necessary, that all men must justify our publishing this defence.

“We have, for a *Re-union*, proposed to subscribe the very phrases they insist on; provided their sense may be duly adjusted, and those plain truths secured, upon which practical Godliness and a true Gospel-ministry so much depend.”†

In some Reflections on the other publication, called “Remarks,” &c. they say:

“These his papers, instead of *removing*, do proclaim and fix that reproach upon him and his adherents, *that they divide for dividing’s sake, and know not about what they differ*. For he assigneth their divisions to one or two *mere words* or *law-terms*, as to the syllables and letters, and not to the sense, upon which they will not openly fix their disagreement. But if he would remove this reproach, let him plainly and honestly contend for *their errors*, which we oppose, and no longer deceive the

\* Works, vol. iv. pp. 377—379.

† Ib. pp. 382—385.

world by impertinently nibbling at a few expressions, and from thence charging us with opinions which he is convinced we all of us abhor. Only he thinks it will be a greater reproach to acknowledge they divide for such horrid errors, than that they divide for dividing's sake, &c.\*

They speak of having "fully cleared themselves of Arminianism" by the Third Paper, and ask, 'Do not we and Mr. Williams's book assert Christ's sufferings to be a *punishment in satisfaction to punitive justice*?'—which the *Remarker* declares to be the distinguishing point. What a slanderous spirit acteth this man, that makes Christ's Satisfaction to punitive justice, to be that which distinguisheth the *Arminians* and *Socinians* from the Orthodox! and yet ranketh us among the former, though he knows all of us assented to the Third Paper, which affirmeth Christ's sufferings were a satisfaction to punitive justice."†

Mr. Lobb, the author, it appears, of these publications, had frequently quoted Bishop Stillingfleet and Dr. Edwards, Master of Jesus College, Oxford, against Dr. Williams's judgment on a commutation of persons. Letters from these learned divines are subjoined, fully acquitting him from the calumnious charges alleged against him. The latter thus writes to Dr. Williams: "You have very rightly, and in an orthodox manner, stated the doctrine of *Christ's Satisfaction*; and it is in perfect agreement with the doctrine of our own, and all the reformed Churches; and therefore fully acquits you from the imputation of *Socinianism*."‡

Speaking of certain phrases omitted in the Third Paper by the United Ministers, Dr. W. says: "If they had used none but what the Church of *England* and the Assembly of Divines' *Confession* included, the *Heads of Union* were observed by them, and violated by such as exacted more.§

"Mr. Lobb makes Christ's suffering the punishment of our sins to the satisfaction of justice, the thing which distinguisheth the orthodox from the *Socinians*; and yet he represents Mr. R. as a *Socinian*, who oft asserteth, Christ suffered the punishment of our sins to the satisfaction of justice, even vindictive justice."||

He states that he did not ascribe "the various attacks upon 'Gospel Truth' and its author, to the Congregationals as a body."

\* Ib. p. 387.

† P. 395.

‡ P. 427.

§ P. 458.

|| P. 459.



In a postscript to "Gospel Truth stated," &c. published in 1698, Dr. Williams farther vindicates himself from Mr. Lobb's charge of Socinianism, in regard to the doctrine of Christ's satisfaction. He explains Christ's *dying in the stead of sinners*, by his "coming into their room, as they are liable and obliged to die, and, suffering death, to make satisfaction for their sins, and ransom them from death," and adds, "I can easily prove it to be the sense of that phrase in our Confessions of Faith."\* Though he refuses to acknowledge that Christ sustained the person of sinners, in the sense of being adjudged himself a sinner, he allows that Christ "died to satisfy vindictive justice, and that his sufferings were *real* punishments, though *vicarious*," being endured for *our* sins.†

He subjoins a paper which he had sent to a general meeting of the subscribers to the lecture at *Pinner's Hall*, which was read publicly, before the unhappy breach in that lecture, in which he declared that he was willing to join with Mr. Cole in subscribing a Declaration and doctrinal articles. The former is thus introduced:—

"Though there may be some lesser differences between us, yet we account these following *principles* a ground of agreement, notwithstanding any past debates, and of encouragement to each other's ministry, being sorry for any misapprehensions of each other's doctrine, &c.

Among the doctrinal principles which, says Mr. Williams, "I affirm as my judgment in all my books, and am ready to subscribe with Mr. Cole," are:

"1. God has eternally *elected* a certain definite number of men, whom he will *infallibly save by Christ*, in that way prescribed by the Gospel.

"3. By the ministry of the Gospel, there's a *serious offer* of pardon and glory, upon the *terms* of the Gospel, to all that hear it; and God thereby *requires* them to comply with the said terms.

"5. It is by the power of the *Spirit of Christ*, freely exerted, and not by the power of *free-will*, that the Gospel becomes *effectual* for the conversion of any soul to the obedience of faith.

"6. When a man believes, yet is not that very *faith*, and much less any other work, the matter of that righteousness *for which* a sinner is *justified*, that is, entitled to pardon, to acceptance as righteous, and to

\* Works, vol. iv. p. 517.

† Ib. p. 522.

eternal glory *before God*: and it is the *imputed righteousness* of Christ alone, *for which* the Gospel gives the believer a right to these and all saving blessings, who in this respect is *justified by Christ's righteousness alone*. By both *this* and the 5th head, it appears that *all boasting is excluded*, and we are *saved by free grace*.

"8. God has freely promised, that all whom he *predestinated* to salvation, shall not only savingly believe, but that he, by his power, will preserve them from *a total or a final apostacy*.

"10. The law of innocency, or *the moral law*, is so in force still, as that every *precept* thereof constitutes duty, even to the believer; every *breach* thereof is a sin deserving death; and this law binds death, *by its curse*, on every unbeliever; and the righteousness for or by which we are justified before God, is a righteousness (at least) adequate to that law, which is Christ's alone righteousness; and this is so imputed to the believer, as that God deals judicially with him according thereto."<sup>\*</sup>

In the same postscript, quoting the answer in the Assembly's Catechism, on Justification, he calls it "our Catechism."<sup>†</sup>

The following passage contains a positive statement of their agreeing with the orthodox on this great doctrine:

"I pity the weakness of these men, who, when their noise is about *Justification*, tell the world we are therein *Amyraldians*; whereas *Amyraldus* was so exactly *Calvinistical* in this point, that the last Synod of *Charenton* appointed him to defend the Protestant doctrine of justification against *Millettère*—(yea, *Arminius* was professedly so too :) but his offending notions respected the Divine will, decrees, subjective grace, and the extent of Christ's death. Though the last was not condemned by the *French Church*, and is owned by *Davenant*, *Usher*, &c. Nay, see Mr. *Lobb*, in his *Glory of Free Grace*, pp. 66, 67, proving, *that the salvation of every man is become possible by Christ's satisfying divine justice by his death*."<sup>‡</sup>

The reader will, from these extracts, be able to judge whether the Presbyterians were, at this time, Arminians.

We are now approaching the termination of this unhappy controversy. The Congregational ministers at length took measures to clear themselves from those erroneous opinions of which their body had been long suspected, and perhaps a few individuals among them too justly accused. Toward the

\* Works, vol. iv. pp. 534—535.

† Ib. p. 544.

‡ Ib. p. 548.

end of 1698, they put forth "A Declaration against Antinomian errors;" and in 1699, Dr. Williams published "An End to Discord; wherein is demonstrated, that no Doctrinal Controversy remains between the *Presbyterian* and *Congregational* Ministers, fit to justify longer Divisions: with a true Account of Socinianism, as to the Satisfaction of Christ." The following is the title of the fourth chapter: "It is made evident, that this Declaration of our Brethren, taken altogether, and examined with due Charity and Candour, ought to be acknowledged a *sufficient Vindication* of the approvers thereof from all hurtful Antinomian Errors." It thus concludes: "If the reader consult these places, and compare with them our State of Truth and Error, in the first chapter, he cannot but rejoice in our brethren's testimony against Antinomianism." The next chapter gives a particular account of Socinian errors concerning Christ's Satisfaction, and as to Justification, (these being the only points objected against the United Ministers;) and also of Limborch's and some other Arminian errors about these two articles, which the writer, in the name of the Presbyterian brethren, proceeds to "renounce."

"Finding our Brethren suggest, in the Preface to this Declaration, that, after all we have said, yet still we ought to do more to discharge ourselves from hurtful errors about Christ's Satisfaction, and our Justification; we shall, to promote peace, renounce several more errors about those two doctrines wherein we are suspected, and tell them what we think to be *truths*."

"*Error 1.* Punitive justice against sin is no property of God, but only an effect of his will, and therefore there was no need of any satisfaction to be made by Christ for sin; nor is it less than ridiculous to say, God was at once *just* as well as *merciful*, in bringing about our salvation by Christ."

"*Truth.* God is essentially just, and so jealous for the honour of his law, when enacted, and his government, that sin must not go unpunished; and, therefore, if sinners be saved from the punishments threatened by the violated law, for Christ their Mediator's sake, it was *necessary* that he made *satisfaction* to punitive justice, by enduring the penal effects of God's wrath."

"*Error 2.* Jesus Christ is not the true eternal *most high God*, of the same substance, authority, and power with the Father."

*“ Truth.* Jesus Christ is the true eternal *most high God*, of the same substance, authority, and power with the Father; and in time assumed the human nature, and remaineth God-Man for evermore.

*“ Note.* This article is inserted because the *value* of Christ’s obedience and death, for *satisfaction* and *merit*, was derived from the dignity of Christ’s person as God; and, therefore, though the *Socinians* faintly argue that, if Christ were the eternal God, it would not render his death a satisfaction, yet it is evident their great concern in denying Christ’s satisfaction, is to prevent the unanswerable argument this would be for his Deity. The like is also to be seen by their notion of the *Lord’s supper*.\*

*“ Error 6.* Christ was not an high-priest while on earth, nor was his blood offered by him to God; but it was *himself* was offered, and that not on the cross, but when he entered into heaven. Yet the death of Christ so far belongs to his priesthood, that he was prepared by his death to become an high-priest, and to offer himself a perfect sacrifice for sin in heaven, neither of which could be if his death had not intervened.

*“ Truth.* Christ was an high-priest while he was *on earth*, and, as such, upon the cross offered up himself, by his bloody death, a perfect sacrifice, whereby his blood was a propitiatory offering at the very time it was shed; and though, in the virtue thereof, the saints were saved before his incarnation, and Christ for ever intercedeth in heaven, yet the presenting of himself or it there, makes no additions to the perfection of it as a sacrifice.†

*“ Error 8.* Redemption, mentioned in the New Testament, signifies no more nor other than a freeing us from the punishment of sin, without any proper price intervening; &c.

*“ Truth.* Redemption by the blood of Christ, is, that we are bought by his blood as a proper price, and delivered from the curse of the law, and captivity under sin and Satan, as by a proper ransom paid to the just governor of the world.‡

*“ Error 15.* Christ’s sufferings were not a full satisfaction to justice, nor was the price of our redemption fully equivalent to the misery we deserved; &c.

*“ Truth.* Though the great mercy of God appeared in his being willing to admit, accept, and provide Christ our Mediator, to make satisfaction for our sins; yet God our just Governor would have it, that the terms of satisfaction proposed to our Mediator should be such as *strict Justice* demanded for the honour of his violated law, and securing the ends of his government; which terms were no lower

\* Dr. Williams’s Works, vol. v. p. 43-45.

† Ibid. p. 47, 48.

‡ Ibid. 49, 50.

than that he should suffer what was fully equivalent to the punishments they, whom he was to redeem, deserved to endure ; &c.

“ *Error 16.* Our faith and regeneration were not *merited* by Christ.

“ *Truth.* Considering that our new-birth and faith are the fruits of the Holy Spirit, whom by sin we had expelled, his return to regenerate and make us believers, must be *for the sake*, and with respect to the *merits* of Christ, as what vindicated the honour of God, who restored him to us.\*

“ We shall also provide against Limborch’s, and some other *Arminians* notion of justification ; though it be none of the *five points* which constitute Arminianism, and in the former papers we have opposed each of the said points, in concurrence with our British divines in the synod of Dort.† [This relates to the meaning of faith being imputed for righteousness.]

“ The Socinians argue against Christ’s sufferings being a full equivalent to the punishments the sinner deserved, and, on that account, they deny that his sufferings could be a full price of redemption, or a satisfaction ; and well they may, when they call him a *mere creature*.”‡ [After shewing that Baxter was *orthodox* and ‘Anti-Socinian,’ with reference to the satisfaction effected by the death of Christ, the writer says—]“ I thought this account necessary, not only for the fore-mentioned end, but also that our Agreement, in opposition to Socinianism, might not exclude Mr. Baxter, and such as approve of his scheme ; which would add strength to that Heresy, and be injurious to many worthy persons. Nor ought a *few words* so fully explained be pressed to brand them with that odious title, who could more plausibly fix the same character on persons, from things plainly asserted in the Socinian sense, and subserving their hypothesis.”§

The Calvinism of the Presbyterians during the period in question is denied in the most positive terms. Mr. Hunter, who admits that “ it is a Calvinian system of Christianity which is embodied in the Catechisms issued by the Assembly of Divines ;” asserts, that “ fifty years after, Calvinism had nearly, if not entirely, disappeared from the Presbyterian ministers, who had declined from the system of their Calvinian fathers into Arminianism.”¶ He had previously stated, that “ while the Presbyterian ministers, after the Act of Toleration, scarcely in any instance carried the orthodoxy of their faith higher than the point of that modification of Arminianism which is sometimes called (after that eminent

\* Dr. Williams’s Works, vol. v. p. 55, 56.

† Ib. p. 58.

‡ Ib. p. 75.

§ Ib. p. 82.

¶ Hist. Def. p. 40.

Presbyterian, Baxter,) Baxterianism, the Independent ministers were for the most part Calvinists.”\*

“If the Presbyterians were strict Calvinists, how [it is asked] came Predestination to be a subject of contention?”† But it yet remains to be proved, that either this or any other of the five points in dispute between Calvinists and Arminians was a subject of contention among Presbyterians, or between them and the Independents. No controversy arose on this point, even incidentally, during the warm debate occasioned by the republication of Dr. Crisp’s Sermons. I do not, however, assert that, as a body, they were “strict and rigid Calvinists,” for I believe that, during the latter part of the period in question, they held what is now designated “moderate Calvinism.”† They agreed, in general, with the Reformer of Geneva, or, to adopt Mr. Hunter’s expression concerning the Independent ministers, (which I admit to be accurate in reference to them,) the Presbyterian ministers were, “for the most part, Calvinists.” Some of them, indeed, were inclined to Baxterianism, but the system advocated by Baxter was little more than a slight modification of Calvinism. In other words, they professed to occupy a middle term between what they regarded, and what these writers repeatedly mention as two opposite extremes, Arminianism and Antinomianism.

Mr. Cooper boldly asserts that the Presbyterians of this period “had adopted Arminian principles” previously to the “separation which speedily followed the Union of 1691,” and which, according to him, “was occasioned by the Arminianism of the Presbyterians, and the ultra-Calvinism or Antinomianism of the Independents.” In proof of this assertion, he produces a few passages from Calamy’s *Historical Additions to the Life of Baxter*; the last of which appears to me to prove just the opposite of that which it is introduced to establish, at least with regard to the Presbyterians.—“In 1695 the Dissenters still continued their doctrinal contentions; an attempt was made for re-union among them. There

\* Hist. Def. pp. 16, 17.

† Hist. p. 35.

was an offer, on one side, to renounce Arminianism, if the other would but renounce Antinomianism; but it did not succeed.\*

Here we have an offer made by the Presbyterian ministers, in 1695, to *renounce* Arminianism, brought to prove that they “had adopted Arminian principles;” or, as the learned counsel afterwards expresses it, “had quitted the tenets of Calvin, to embrace those of the Leyden professor.”

But let us hear Mr. Cooper again, speaking, it would appear, of a somewhat later period, though the passage occupies an earlier page in his printed speech—

“As is well known to all those who have made the history of the Dissenters their study—the Presbyterians, towards the close of the seventeenth century, began to decline from the doctrine of predestination, and at the beginning of the eighteenth century they had very generally embraced the opposite opinion. This secession from Calvin, and coalition with Arminius, might be shewn by extracts from the sermons and controversial tracts of the Presbyterians who flourished during the period that I have mentioned.” Mr. Cooper then proceeds to “mention two doctrinal works published by eminent Presbyterian ministers who lived at the close of the seventeenth century, in both of which the Calvinistic tenets must have been found, had they then been generally recognised by the denomination to which those ministers belonged.”† The first of these, Dr. Williams’s “*Gospel Truth stated and vindicated*,” 1692, he tells us, was “written against the opinion of Dr. Crisp, who, from having been a follower of Arminius, had gone into the opposite extreme, and embraced Antinomianism.” The reader will be little prepared for the sentence which follows: “The system of divinity contained in this work is of course Calvinistic!!” How this fact, admitted to be beyond dispute, will prove that the author had rejected Calvinism and embraced the system of Arminius, is to me inexplicable.

\* Substance of the Speech of C. P. Cooper, Esq. as counsel for the Rev. Charles Wellbeloved, in the suit of the Attorney-General *versus* Shore, 2d July, 1834. 2d edition, 1834, pp. 26, 27.

† *Ib.* pp. 24, 25.

That Dr. Daniel Williams was a moderate Calvinist might be proved by numerous extracts from his controversial writings. Sufficient has already been produced to shew this; but I may quote the propositions which commence the first chapter of his ‘Gospel Truth stated and vindicated,’ “Of the State of the Elect before effectual calling.” He thus lays down the “*Truth*: It is certain, from God’s decree of election, that the elect shall in time be justified, adopted, and saved in the way God hath appointed; and the whole meritorious cause and price of justification, adoption, and eternal life, were perfect when Christ finished the work of satisfaction. Nevertheless, the elect remain children of wrath, and subject to condemnation, till they are effectually called by the operation of the Spirit.” \*

The other work referred to, is Matthew Henry’s Exposition, which Mr. Cooper asserts “is not favourable to Calvin.” That this celebrated expositor was a moderate Calvinist, I consider a fact too notorious to require proof; but as it will furnish an opportunity of shewing what is meant by moderate Calvinism, I will introduce a brief extract from his Exposition of John vi. 37: “*All that the Father giveth to me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;*” which was the first passage that occurred to me on reading Mr. Cooper’s statement, and is the only one to which I have referred for the purpose of refuting it. The following is the substance of the author’s remarks, expressed in his own words:—

“There is a certain number of the children of men, whom God chose to be the objects of his ‘special love—the monuments of his mercy. These were given by the Father to Jesus Christ as a possession, lodged in his hands as a trust.”

\* In adducing “*Testimonies*” to this truth, he refers to the Confessions of the Westminster Assembly, and the Congregational Elders at the Savoy, both of whom he says, “are fully of this mind:—all those whom God hath predestinated to life, he is pleased, in the appointed and accepted time, effectually to call by his word and Spirit, *out of that state of sin and death*, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ, by enlightening their minds,” &c. He then quotes a passage from Dr. Owen’s Treatise of Justification, which he considers as “express,” in favour of the same doctrine.



“*Every one* may have eternal life, if it be not his own fault. This Gospel is to be preached—this offer made to all, and none can say, ‘It belongs not to me.’”

This, with scarcely an exception, was the Calvinism of the English Presbyterians during the period in question, and it is the Calvinism of the modern Independents. It recognises the unlimited value and universal aspect of the sacrificial death of Christ, in connexion with the sovereignty of divine grace, in applying the blessings procured thereby to the hearts of individuals, by the power of the Holy Spirit enabling them to believe and obey the gospel, which thus becomes the gospel of their salvation. As the Holy Spirit is promised, and will be assuredly granted, to all who implore that “perfect gift” from God, in the name of Jesus Christ, the salvation of all is rendered possible, while that of actual believers is certain.

But we may inquire more particularly, what were the tenets of the Presbyterians concerning “Election or Predestination,” “which,” says Mr. Cooper, “every body knows, is the great and distinguishing doctrine of Calvin.”

“Against the doctrine of Election,” Mr. Hunter tells us, “the whole body of the Presbyterian ministers of this period were set with an united effort.”\* He even goes so far as to assert, that “Christianity with or without Election, are quite different things.”†

“To make Christianity comprehensive in its design, to open its benefits to all, was the distinguishing principle of their conduct, (say the English Presbyterian Association,) strongly contrasting with the narrow character and hopelessness of the doctrine of Election.”‡

Yet Baxter himself believed in this narrow and hopeless doctrine. “I confess (he says) that God did eternally elect a certain number of determinate individual persons, to be infallibly justified and saved by Christ in time; and that these were given to Christ that he should die for them, and for them only, with a special intention of actually justifying and saving them.”|| He also held, that in a different, though consistent sense, Christ died for the whole human race—“I yield that

\* Hist. Def. p. 34. † Ib. p. 40. ‡ Hist. p. 29. || Confession of his Faith, p. 98.

Christ's sacrifice was a sufficient satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, and not for the elect only; and that it was not only the sins of the elect which were the cause of Christ's suffering, but of fallen mankind in general."\*

Such were Baxter's views of particular election on the one hand, and of universal redemption on the other. In the words of Dr. Watts, he believed that "God has elected some which shall certainly be saved: he owned, according to Calvin, the merits of Christ's death to be applied to believers only; but, also, that all men are in a state capable of salvation."†

The English Presbyterian Association have elsewhere made a nearer approach to accuracy on this point than Mr. Hunter. "The distinguishing doctrinal opinion," say they, "of the English Presbyterians, at, and for some time after, the Revolution, seems to have been a modified Arminianism, frequently called Baxterianism, occupying a middle station between strict Calvinism and Arminianism. It admitted that Christ died for some especially, and for all generally; all possessing the means of salvation. Between Baxterians and Calvinists, the principal Non-conformists may be considered to have been divided," (Hist. p. 18.) In illustration of their view of Baxter's doctrine, they quote these lines from book iii. of *Paradise Lost*:—

"Some have I chosen of peculiar grace,  
Elect above the rest; so is my will.  
The rest shall hear me call, and oft be warn'd  
Their sinful state, and to appease betimes  
The incensed Deity, while offered grace  
Invites . . . . ."

\* Confession of his Faith, p. 220.

† "The Life, Times, and Correspondence of the Rev. I. Watts, D. D., by the Rev. T. Milner, M. A." 8vo. 1834; a work worthy of the Doctor's name. p. 194. "But so long," he adds, "as Mr. Baxter owns no salvation, but by the salvation [sacrifice ?] and merits of Christ, and no application of these without believing, and no true faith but what is the gift of God: hence, there is sufficient ground to believe that his opinions, and his followers, who are generally not so wide as himself, are not so exceeding dangerous as some men think them; and we may believe them true Christians, though they may differ in many things from the Confession of Faith, and the general opinions of the Reformers and Reformed Churches." Dr. Watts,

Baxter, while he certainly held what is here ascribed to him, that Christ died for some especially, held also, that all (at least all to whom the gospel is proposed, or who are within the reach of its offered grace) possess the means of salvation. To adopt the words of his late excellent and lamented biographer—"He believed in election, but not that reprobation is its counterpart, as is too commonly represented."\*

But this agrees with the opinion entertained by modern Calvinists, especially those among the Independents, who now occupy about the position taken by Baxter, and long maintained by many succeeding Presbyterians, and *in this respect* would, perhaps, be more correctly designated Baxterians. They believe in the election of certain individuals to eternal life, and, consequently, in a restricted application of the work of redemption; but they do not believe in what may justly be called *the horrible decree of absolute reprobation*, irrespective of a wilful and determined persistence in impenitence and unbelief.

The reader will permit me to introduce here a passage illustrative of the views now generally held by Congregational Dissenters, from an able work, entitled, "A Defence of Modern Calvinism, containing an Examination of Bishop Tomline's Refutation of Calvinism," 8vo. 1812. The learned author, Dr. Edward Williams, was many years Theological Professor in the Independent College at Rotherham, in Yorkshire.

in the account which he afterwards gives of the English Presbyterians, says, "Their doctrine is generally Calvinistical; but many of those who are called Presbyterians, have of late years inclined more to Mr. Baxter." p. 196. The date at which this was written does not appear, but it was probably about 1702.

\* Life and Times of Baxter, Vol. II. p. 77.—Mr. Orme, to confirm this, subjoins:—"In the following passage, he seems to express this sentiment very fairly:—'By all this, it appeareth that *election* and *reprobation* go not *pari passu*, or are not equally ascribed to God; for in *election*, God is the cause of the means of salvation by his grace, and of all that truly tendeth to procure it. But on the other side, God is no cause of any sin which is the means and merit of damnation; nor the cause of damnation, but on the supposition of man's sin. So that sin is foreseen in the person decreed to damnation, but not caused, seeing the decree must be denominated from the effect and object. But in *election*, God decreeth to give us his grace, and be the chief cause of all our holiness; and doth not elect us to salvation on foresight that we will do his will, or be sanctified by ourselves without him.'"—End of Controversies, p. 162.

“An unguarded reader of the Refutation might be induced to apply the following language to Calvinists indiscriminately: ‘The equally erroneous and baneful doctrine of *moral incapacity*, in the extent unhappily adopted by CALVIN, tends to produce hopeless melancholy, or hardened profligacy.’\* By ‘moral incapacity’ we are naturally led to understand a disinclination, a dislike, or a want of good will to what is right or excellent, in a moral sense. Now it would be difficult to find in the writings of CALVIN a greater moral incapacity than is expressed in the formularies of the Church of England, especially in the Article ‘On Original Sin.’ However, neither CALVIN, nor any other person, ever expressed it in stronger terms than St. Paul, when he said, that ‘the carnal mind is *enmity against God*; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can* be: so then they that are in the flesh, *cannot* please God.† ‘The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither *can* he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.’‡ Is it possible for language to express a greater degree of ‘moral incapacity?’ Indeed, I allow and lament it, that CALVIN and some others after him have illegitimately *inferred* an ‘incapacity’ beside what is ‘moral;’ I mean, an incapacity implied in a supposed decree of reprobation. Nothing, I am persuaded, has more impeded the progress of theological and moral truth, or set the sentiments of real Christians more at variance, than an attempt to establish this unfounded dogma. And to speak my mind impartially, I freely concede to his Lordship that its tendency is ‘to produce hopeless melancholy, or hardened profligacy.’ But then, his Lordship ought to have known, that very few modern Calvinists ever advance it, and with the great body of them it is a sentiment utterly exploded.”§

But it may be said, “if the Presbyterians who witnessed the Revolution of 1688” (to use an expression of Mr. Cooper’s||) were not Arminians, their successors, before the end of the

\* Refut. p. 78.

† Rom. viii. 7, 8.

‡ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

§ Pp. 307, 308; see also p. 269.

|| Substance of Speech, p. 32.

next reign, might have widely departed from 'the Calvinism of the Assembly of Divines.' Whether the Reformer of Geneva would have "owned them as part of his flock,"\* (to borrow phraseology again from Mr. Cooper,) is a circumstance I do not pretend to determine. Certain I am they were generally, and for the most part, moderate Calvinists.

I shall now produce a passage from "A Defence of the Doctrine and Discipline of the Church of England," containing also an attack on Dissenters, by Dr. William Nichols, published in 1715:—"If we consider the different phrase and method of their prayers, some being Calvinistical, others Arminian; though we could think the Holy Spirit would descend to the singularities of these theologists, yet we must not charge him with such contrarieties and clashings as they are guilty of." The learned James Peirce, in his Vindication of the Dissenters, published in answer to the work from which the above is taken, thus animadvert on this vituperative passage: "Who, I pray, are those Arminians among us? Our author, perhaps, here meant the Quakers, or some of the Anabaptists. But if we will speak the truth, the Arminians themselves are hardly Arminians in offering up their prayers to God."†

Can any person suppose for a moment, after reading this passage, that the Presbyterians, any more than the Independents, or those called "Particular Baptists," were at that time Arminians?

But to place the matter beyond the possibility of doubt, I will quote a passage from Dr. Calamy's "Brief but True Account of the Protestant Dissenters in England," first printed at the end of a sermon, published in 1717:—

"But notwithstanding these, and some other such differences among themselves [on the mode of Church Government and Baptism] they generally agree in the doctrinal Articles of the Church of England, (which they subscribe,) the Confession of Faith, and larger and smaller Catechisms, compiled by the Assembly of Divines at *Westminster*, and the judgment of the *British* Divines at the Synod of *Dort*, about the *Quinquarticular Controversies*." p. 44.

\* Substance of Speech. p. 27.

† 2d Ed. corrected, 1718. p. 401.

We have seen how nearly Baxter's views coincided with what, in a passage already quoted (p. 12, ante) he calls the "moderation of the Synod of Dort," with whose sentiments and decisions he almost entirely concurred. Dr. Calamy also, in the preface to a sermon on Rom. ix. 16, preached at the Merchants' Lecture at Salter's Hall, October 20, 1702, and published under the title—"Divine Mercy exalted; or, Free Grace in its glory;" thus expresses the same accordance:—

"Some have given themselves a liberty to reflect on their brethren who adhere to the suffrage of the British divines in the Synod of Dort, as not duly concerned for the honour of the grace of God in the salvation of sinners. One thing I aimed at in choosing this subject, was to prove that censure groundless. 'Tis true, I have considered divine grace as actually discovering itself to sinners, rather than as purposed in the decree. But he that would see that discussed, and the doctrine of *Particular Election* maintained, consistently with a general love of God to the world, would do well to consult the learned and peaceable Bishop Davenant's animadversions upon Hoard's Treatise of God's Love to Mankind; a book which is not valued according to its worth, though one would think it were therefore the more to be regarded in these points, because the worthy author was so considerable a member of the forementioned Synod, in which the controversy about Grace and Free Will was so distinctly debated."\*

One of the earliest avowed Arminians among the Presbyterians was Mr., afterwards the celebrated Dr., George Benson, of whom the following account is derived from an authentic source:—He was ordained at Abingdon, Berks, March 27th, 1723, by Dr. Calamy, and five other ministers, and continued there seven years. In early life, he had been instructed in those principles that are usually termed Calvinistical, and preached them during the first years of his ministry. While at Abingdon he published three practical discourses, addressed to young persons, which were well received. These, however, on account of their evangelical tendency, he afterwards caused to be suppressed. He continued at Abingdon till 1729, when he was obliged to leave that place on account of the Arminian sentiments he had lately embraced, which were very generally disapproved by his people.† He removed to London, and accepted an invitation (strange to say!) to succeed, at King

\* Preface, pp. iii. iv.

† Hist. of Dissenting Churches in London, vol. i. p. 114.

John's Court, Southwark, Mr. James Matthews, who died the preceding year, of whom we are informed that "he was a plain and zealous preacher of Jesus Christ, and salvation by him alone; a hearty Calvinist, and a serious Christian."\* Arminianism, however, did not at this period prevail among the London Presbyterians, as the following circumstance will prove. Mr. Henry Read, about 1721, became assistant to Mr. Daniel Wilcox, minister of a Presbyterian congregation in Monkwell-street; but, in 1723, Mr. Wilcox, being a zealous Calvinist, and judging Mr. Read's discourses to be too much in the Arminian strain, dismissed him from that situation by his own authority, without consulting his church, which occasioned some of his hearers to leave him.†

The reader might suppose, from the manner in which the writers now under review speak of Dr. Williams and his Presbyterian brethren, who, after his expulsion from Pinners'-hall, withdrew with him, and founded a new lecture at Salters'-hall, that the lecture established there would have assumed a decidedly heterodox character, and that all its preachers, from a very early period, would have been ultra-Baxterians, and some of them decided Arminians. Such, however, was not the fact. They were, it is true, invariably selected from the Presbyterian ministers of London; and biographical accounts of most of them may be found in Mr. Walter Wilson's interesting and valuable "History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches and Meeting-houses in London," published in four volumes, 1808-1814. To that work I confidently appeal, for the purpose of shewing that they continued, even for many years beyond the period in question, almost exclusively moderate Calvinists. I will introduce two brief quotations from the account Mr. Wilson has given of the chapel in Carter-lane, Doctors' Commons, which has lately become the place of meeting for a decidedly Unitarian congregation:‡—"This church, like those of the Presbyterian denomination in general, was constituted upon principles strictly Calvinistical, and the pastors prior to Mr. Newman were moderate Calvinists."§ In the account which

\* Hist. Diss. Ch. vol. iv. pp. 339, 340.

† Ibid. p. 313.

‡ See the Christ. Reformer for Jan. 1835, p. 61.

§ Hist. Diss. Ch. vol. ii. p. 107.

Mr. Wilson gives of Dr. Wright, who became pastor in 1708, and was afterwards chosen one of the lecturers at Salters'-hall, we are informed that his "religious sentiments were in no extreme. He was zealous for the Presbyterian form of church government, and in doctrinal sentiment a moderate Calvinist."\*

We have the means of accurate information concerning the doctrinal opinions of the lecturers in 1731, and out of six it will appear that even at that remote period not one was reputed an Arminian. The authority to which I refer is a MS. entitled "A View of the Dissenting Interest in London, of the Presbyterian and Independent Denominations, from 1695 to December 25th, 1731." It was drawn up by a layman, who, previously to his coming to London, had been a member of the church under the pastoral care of Dr. Doddridge at Northampton.† After having given an account of the two denominations together, he proceeds to give a view of them separately, and arranges the Presbyterian ministers under three classes, which he thus describes: 1st, "deemed Calvinists, that is, such as agree with the Assembly's Catechism—2d, accounted Arminians, or [such as are far gone that way, by which are meant such as are against particular election and redemption, original sin, at least the imputation of it; for the power of man's will in opposition to efficacious grace, and for justification by sincere obedience in the room of Christ's righteousness, &c.—3d, of the middle way, partly Arminians and partly Calvinists, or that sometimes preach one doctrine, and sometimes look towards the other." The first list contains nineteen names; the second, thirteen; the third, twelve. Of the lecturers at Salters'-hall at that time, (Drs. Harris, Earle, Grosvenor and Wright, Messrs. Bayes and John Newman,‡)

\* Hist. Diss. Churches, vol. ii. p. 143.

† The original MS. was in the possession of the late Rev. Samuel Palmer, of Hackney. I quote from a copy made by Mr. Walter Wilson with his own hand, which he has kindly permitted me to use.

‡ Mr. Thomas Newman, who became assistant to Dr. Wright in 1718, and was afterwards pastor till his death in 1758, was probably the first Dissenting minister who defended the doctrine generally indicated by the phrase, *the innocence of mental error*, which had been maintained in a tract by Dr. Sykes, a clergyman of the Church of England, in 1715. This notion Mr. Wilson justly stigmatizes as "most pernicious."



the names of the two first and two last are found in the list containing the Calvinists; those of Drs. Grosvenor and Wright are among those belonging to the intermediate class.

Of the strain of preaching which prevailed in this lecture, a good specimen may be found in two sermons preached there in Nov. 1727, by Mr. John Newman, and published at the request of the ministers, under this title, "The Importance of Knowing Jesus Christ, and him Crucified, both to Ministers and People," from 1 Cor. ii. 2. These excellent and evangelical discourses clearly shew, that at that time there had been no considerable doctrinal relaxation among the leading Presbyterian divines of the metropolis.

Of the ministers who were chosen at Pinner's Hall to supply the vacancies occasioned by the removal of the four who withdrew in 1694, (Dr. Bates, Mr. Howe, Mr. Alsop, and Mr. Williams,) one was Mr. Timothy Cruso, pastor of a Presbyterian church near Aldgate, of which Dr. Lardner was afterwards one of the ministers.\* Mr. Walter Wilson has made

"Such a supposition (he adds) goes directly to destroy the importance of divine truth, and places the infidel upon a level with the believer." I beg to refer the reader to his judicious remarks, vol. ii. pp. 152, 153, and to an able discourse by Dr. Wardlaw, of Glasgow, entitled "Man Responsible for his Belief," occasioned by Lord Brougham's Inaugural Discourse on his installation as Lord Rector of the University of Glasgow in 1825. I need scarcely add, after what has been already produced, that the Presbyterians, of the period in question, did not admit "the innocence" of what the English Presbyterian Association call "involuntary error." Hist. p. 50. Of the immediate successor of Mr. Newman, Rev. Edward Pickard, who is probably entitled to the honour of being the principal founder of that excellent charity, the Orphan Working School, in the City Road, London, (established in 1758, and, I believe, the first institution of the kind in England,) much has lately been said in discussions among the governors of that charity. I will insert one passage from Mr. Wilson's account of him: "Though Mr. Pickard, in his views of some doctrines of Christianity, is known to have followed the tenets of Arius, he is, nevertheless, to be ranked among the high Arians. We have authority for saying, that he was wont to express himself in terms of strong disapprobation of the writings of Dr. Priestley, and other Socinians, who have reduced our Lord to the level of a mere man, and otherwise obscured the doctrines of the gospel," p. 159. For some farther particulars concerning the original and long-continued orthodoxy of this Presbyterian congregation, I may refer to a pamphlet published several years ago by the Rev. John Hoppus, now Professor of the Philosophy of Mind, and Logic, in the University of London. The present congregation cannot claim any right, by succession or descent, to occupy this chapel.

\* Wilson's Diss. Churches, vol. ii. p. 251.

a slight mistake, in stating that the *four* were “selected from the Independent denomination.” He had previously given an account of Mr. Cruso, in connexion with the history of the church near Aldgate, in which we are informed that, “he possessed a sound mind and a steady judgment in the great doctrines of the gospel, which he explained with clearness and precision, and enforced with a becoming solemnity. His religious sentiments harmonized entirely with those of the assembly of divines at Westminster, and, for the doctrines contained in their celebrated Confession, he was a strenuous and able advocate. From a principle of conscience, he sided with the Nonconformists; but he inculcated love and forbearance among Christians of all denominations.\* Mr. Matthew Mead, who, in 1697, preached a sermon (afterwards printed) upon the death of this excellent man, who appears to have been a powerful and eloquent preacher, speaks of him in these terms—“How zealous was he for Christ! how sound in the faith! how apt to teach! He told me, the day before he died, ‘That he had a firm confidence of hope in the infinite righteousness of Jesus Christ.’”†

The reader has already been apprised that the two lectures remained distinct, and were both carried on for many years. That at Salters’ Hall, on account of the great falling off in attendance, was dropped about 1794. The one carried on at Pinner’s Hall is still continued, and is now preached at New Broad-street, the ancient meeting-house in which it was commenced,—a venerable edifice, which, if now standing, might be almost regarded as the cathedral of Nonconformity,—having been taken down. But, though the present lecturers, (Drs. Pye Smith, Joseph Fletcher, and H. F. Burder, Messrs. Binney, John and George Clayton,) are among the most learned and popular of the London ministers; the congregations do not now, as formerly, consist chiefly of persons belonging to the most opulent families of the metropolis, then firmly attached to the Dissenters. Yet the cause of Nonconformity, though deprived of the support and countenance which it formerly received from a large portion of the most wealthy citizens, flourishes

\* Wilson’s Diss. Chs. vol. i. pp. 58, 59.

† Ibid. pp. 61, 62.

by its native vigour. The great principles of liberty and truth, on which it is founded, being permanent, have, amidst numerous external changes, remained immoveable, and are destined, we doubt not, to obtain, ere long, universal prevalence.

The lecture, being originally supported by the subscriptions of some of the most eminent London merchants, was formerly called the Merchants' Lecture. A list of the lecturers may be seen in Mr. W. Wilson's History, vol. ii. pp. 252-254. There are some important charitable trust funds, which the donors have left to be managed and administered by the lecturers for the time being.

I may here introduce a brief notice of one distinguished individual among the four ministers who accompanied Dr. Williams to Salters' Hall—John Howe. Dr. Calamy states, that "he had a considerable hand in drawing up the Heads of Agreement,"\* and Mr. Orme tells us, that he was "the leading manager" on that occasion.† Dr. Watts, who was personally acquainted with him during the latter years of his life, commences an ode inscribed to him in 1704, with these words, which scarcely need the plea of poetical exaggeration to justify them:—

"Great man, permit the muse to climb,  
And seat her at thy feet."

In another line the poet has accurately described the distinguishing quality of his mind and character:—

"Howe hath an ample orb of soul."

This admirable person, himself a truly catholic Christian, and of the most comprehensive charity, had been for many years an earnest advocate for harmony and concord among all the disciples of a common Master, the professors of a religion, of which he regarded love as the pervading spirit, the animating soul, the essential principle. He deeply lamented that the Christian church, instead of resembling a firmly compacted body, a coherent and organized whole, should exhibit a disjointed appearance, broken into separate portions, and crumbled into minute fragments. His lofty philosophical

\* Life of Howe, p. 181.

† Life and Times of Baxter, vol. i. p. 492.

genius, and calm placid temperament, raised him above the element of storms, while the ardour of his devotional feelings rendered him familiar with the objects of an higher sphere. The views which he took of every subject which engaged his attention were eminently large and comprehensive, and the sentiments he entertained partook of the habitual elevation of his mind and character. From the tranquil and serene region in which he dwelt, he looked down with pity, not unmingled with more severe emotion, on the eager combatants who occupied the arena of theological debate below. In this respect he presented a striking contrast to Baxter, whom, in the general features of his character, he closely resembled. That extraordinary man, with all his horror of sects and divisions, had, it must be confessed, probably from some infirmity of natural temper, or morbid physical affection, a disputatious propensity, from which Howe was entirely free, though he also too often encumbered the pages of his admirable writings with metaphysical subtleties, and scholastic niceties. They both, however, agreed in refusing to identify themselves with any particular section of the Christian Church, and to both might be justly applied the words of Howe, in reference to another excellent divine, who, after being silenced by the Act of Uniformity, was occupied and useful, “not in *serving a party*, a thing too mean and little to be ever thought of by him without disdain; but in pressing the *great* and *agreed* things that belong to *serious, living* religion.”\* To Howe also might be applied what he says of the same person: “he liked not to discompose his mind by busy agitations with others, about that truth which he found himself in a pleasant secure possession of, nor to contend concerning that which he had not found it necessary to contend for; he declined controversy, not from inability, but dislike.”† His natural disposition was remarkably sweet, benign, and gentle; his whole deportment marked by dignified courtesy, suited to attract love and conciliate esteem, while his intellectual endowments, of the highest order, were fitted to command veneration and inspire awe.

\* Funeral Sermon for Rev. Richard Fairclough, 1682, p. 58.

† *Ib.* p. 42.

His person and character formed, in short, one of the rare exceptions to the truth of that aphorism :

“ Non bene conveniunt, nec in unâ sede morantur  
Majestas et Amor.”

In 1662 he became, as the result of deliberate judgment, a Nonconformist to the national form of professing the Christian religion then adopted. Placed, by circumstances over which he could exercise no control, among those who felt obliged by a sense of duty to stand aloof from the Church by law established, he could not with any propriety be called a separatist, and was far remote from being a schismatic or sectarian. He was driven, by the unwarranted requirements and unjust impositions of human law, to take his lot with those who refused solemnly to declare their “ full assent and consent to all and every thing contained in and prescribed by the book of Common Prayer.” Thus was he compelled, (with several hundreds besides,) by the force of conscientious conviction, and a sacred regard to religious principle, to assume a position and occupy a situation which he exceedingly disliked ; being placed in that predicament by no act and for no fault of his own, but solely by the act of other parties ; an act purporting, indeed, to be authoritative, being that of the legislature of his country, but, in his judgment, one of usurpation, and invading the prerogative of a higher tribunal, by claiming to exercise control over conscience.

But while he counted Nonconformity an act, or rather a state, rendered imperative by a paramount obligation to the Supreme Ruler, the only Lord of conscience, he earnestly longed, and for many years eagerly sought, though in vain, for such an abatement in the terms of compliance, and such an extension of the limits prescribed to the “ National Church,” as might have embraced a large portion of his nonconforming brethren, like-minded with himself. He was also an advocate for occasional communion with that church, which he recommended by his own practice. Some years, however, before his death, (in 1705,) it appears he abandoned all farther expectation of seeing this desirable consummation accomplished. He

preached a sermon, on the day of thanksgiving for the Happy Return of King William, on the restoration of peace, December 2, 1697, which he published, with a dedication to Lord Haversham,\* (probably at that time connected with the Dissenters, though I believe he afterwards left them,) whom he thus addresses :

“ I reckon your lordship is so much taken up with the great things of religion, as to be less taken with the adventitious things men have thought fit to affix to it. I do not more emulate your lordship in anything, than a disdain of bigotry ; nor more honour anything I discern in you, than true Catholicism. And recounting what things and persons do truly belong to a church, I believe your lordship is not professedly of a larger church, as counting it too large for you, but too narrow, and that you affect not to be of a self-distinguished party.” He concludes by avowing “ the agreeableness of such sentiments to his own mind and spirit.”

He pathetically laments the want of mutual love among Christians, and deplores “ that breaches should be kept open by trifles and unaccountable things, of which no man of sense can pretend to give an account. That there is strife, too manifestly, not from the love of *truth*, whereof not one hair needs be lost, (nor of any other valuable thing,) but merely from the love of strife ; when, as to the most material and important truths, men are agreed, but would *seem* to disagree ; they mean the same things, but impute to one another a different meaning, and pretend to know the other’s mind better than themselves, that on that pretence they may quarrel with them ! All this looks fatally ; and our unjust angers at one another, are too expressive of God’s just anger with us all ; that his good Spirit, that Spirit of love, peace, kindness, benignity, is so notoriously resisted, vexed, grieved, and despised by us. And the consequences are likely, *for some time*, to be very dismal ; though when God hath proceeded in a way of punitive animadversion, so far as he shall judge necessary for the vindication of his own name, and the honour of our religion, so scandalously misrepresented to the world, it will be easy to him, by one victorious effort of that Spirit, to reduce the Christian church to its original genuine temper, and make it shine again in its own native light and lustre. But, in the mean time, I cannot see that there is greater need of an over-pouring influence of the Holy Ghost, to draw men into union with Christ, and thereby to bring back apostate souls

\* To the Sermon is prefixed “ Dr. Bates’s Congratulatory Speech to the King, November 22d, in the name of the Dissenting Ministers in and about London.” It does not appear whether the Presbyterians and Independents united in this address, but I consider it highly probable that such was the fact.

to God, or to work in them *faith* and *repentance*, than to bring them into union *upon Christian terms* with one another; or that the love of this world, or any the most ignominious sensual lust or vice, (drunkenness, gluttony, or any other,) are more hardly or more rarely overcome, than the envy, wrath, malice, which Christians, ordinarily, are not at all shy of expressing toward one another. I speak upon some experience, lamenting that, having this occasion, (which sense of duty will not let me balk,) I have also so much cause, to mention that foregoing observation. For I cannot forget, that some time discoursing with some very noted persons about the business of union among Christians, it hath been freely granted me, that there was not so much as a principle left, (among those the discourse had reference to,) upon which to disagree. And yet the same fixed aversion to union continued as before; as a plain proof, that they were not *principles*, but *ends*, we were still to differ for. In this case, what but the power of an Almighty Spirit can overcome?

“Nor is it mere *peace* that is to be aimed at, but *free, mutual, Christian communion* with such as do all *hold the head, Christ*. And whatsoever mistake in judgment, or obliquity in practice, can consist with *holding the Head*, ought to consist also with being of the same Christian communion; not the same *locally*, which is impossible; but the same occasionally, as any providence invites at this or that time, and mentally, in heart and spirit, at all times. And, indeed, there is not a difference to be found amongst them that *hold the Head*, but must be so minute, that it cannot be a pretence for refusing communion.

To profess want of charity in excuse, [for not taking into communion those *whom the Lord has received*,] is to excuse a fault by a wickedness. It is to usurp Christ’s judgment-seat, and invade his office, *Rom. xiv. 4, 10*. Therefore, wheresoever there is any such case to be found, that, let a man be never so sound in the faith, never so orthodox, let him be in all things else never so regular through his whole conversation, if he do not submit to some doubtful thing, thought, perhaps, a matter of indifferency on the one side, and unlawful on the other; this person must be excluded Christian communion, for no other known pretence, but only that he presumed to doubt somewhat in the imposed terms:—How will this be justified at Christ’s tribunal!

“Nor yet do I look upon this proneness to innovate and devise other terms of Christian communion than Christ hath himself appointed, as the *peculiar character of a party*; but as a symptom of the diseased state of the Christian church, too plainly appearing in all parties; as I also reckon it too low and narrow a design to aim at a *oneness of communion* among Christians of this and that single party and persuasion. Nothing in this kind can be a design worthy of a Christian, or suitable to the Spirit of Christ, but to have Christian

communion extended and limited according to the extent and limits of *visibly serious and vital Christianity*. So far as a discrimination can, and, according to Christ's rules, (not our own unbounded fancies,) ought to be made, any serious *living Christian*, of whatsoever party or denomination, I ought to communicate with *as such, and with only such*. For *living Christians* to sever from one another, or to mingle with the dead, is an equal transgression.

"To sum up all, when once we shall have learned to distinguish between the *Essentials* of Christianity and *accidental appendages*, and between accidents of Christ's appointing and of our devising, and to dread affixing of our own devices to so sacred an institution: much more when [since?] every truth or duty contained in the Bible cannot be counted essential or necessary, when we shall have learned not only not to add inventions of our own to that sacred frame, but much more not to presume to insert them into the order of *Essentials* or *Necessaries*, and treat men as no Christians for wanting them; when the Gospel shall have its liberty to the utmost ends of the earth; when the regenerating Spirit shall go forth with it, and propagate a divine and God-like nature every where among men; when regeneration shall be understood to signify the communicating of such a nature, and such dispositions to men: when the weight of such words comes to be apprehended, [*He that hateth his brother abideth in death*, 1 John 2;] when to be born of God ceases to signify, with us, being proselyted to this or that church formed and distinguished by human device; when religious pretences cease to serve political purposes; when the interest of a party ceases to weigh more with us than the whole Christian interest; when sincerity shall be thought the noblest embellishment of a Christian; *when the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb*, &c. Isa. xi. 6—9;—then will *our peace be as a river*," &c. pp. 19—24.

The reader will easily perceive some of the particular references in these extracts. But let it not be supposed that there were none of the Independent ministers who sympathised in these catholic and truly Christian sentiments. There were no doubt several, though their opinion might be overruled by a majority. We know that there was one, Mr. Matthew Mead, who was the intimate friend of Howe, and for whom, in October, 1699, he preached a funeral sermon, afterwards published, in which he thus refers to his friend's efforts in the same cause:—

"His judgment, in reference to matters of church order, was for Union and Communion of all *visible Christians*, viz. of such as did



visibly *hold the Head*, as to the principal credenda and agenda of Christianity ; the great things belonging to the *faith* and *practice* of a Christian, so as nothing be made necessary to Christian communion, but what Christ hath made necessary ; or what is indeed necessary to one's *being a Christian*. What he publicly essayed to this purpose, the world knows ; and many more private endeavours and strugglings of his for such an Union, I have not been unacquainted with ; the unsuccessfulness of which endeavours, he said, not long before his last confinement, ' he thought would break his heart ; '—he having openly, among divers persons, and with great earnestness, some time before, expressed his consent to *some Proposals*, which, if the parties concerned had agreed in the desire of the thing itself, must unavoidably have inferred such an Union, without prejudice to their principles ; and on such terms, as must have extended it much further, else it had signified little. But this must be effected, as is too apparent, not by mere human endeavour, but by an Almighty Spirit poured forth, which (*after we have suffered a while*,) shall *καταρτίσαι*, put us into joint, and make every joint know its place in the body, 1 *Pet.* v. 10 ; shall conquer private interests and inclinations, and overawe men's hearts by the authority of the divine law, which now, how express soever it is, little availeth against such prepossessions. Till then, Christianity will be (among us) a languishing, withering thing. When the season comes, of such an effusion of the *Spirit from on high*, there will be no parties : and amidst the wilderness desolation that cannot but be till that season comes, it matters little, and signifies to me scarce one straw, what party of us is uppermost."\*

Thus it appears that Howe agreed with Baxter in his views of catholic and comprehensive church-communion ; but that neither of them was an advocate for promiscuous and indiscriminate admission to the most sacred ordinances of Christianity, is also sufficiently apparent. From the extracts just given, let the reader judge whether Howe would have deemed suitable for communion with the church, as visible, serious, living Christians, persons who not only deny that regenerating influence, of the necessity of which he speaks so strongly, but

\* Pp. 54—56. Among the sayings of Mr. Mead, in his last illness, Mr. Howe mentions, *that he expected to be saved only by the righteousness of Christ imputed to him*, and adds, " tho' he well understood, as I had sufficient reason to know, that Christ's righteousness is never imputed to any, but where, if the subject be capable, there is an inherent righteousness also, that is no *cause* of our salvation, but the *character* of the *saved*."—pp. 57, 58,

even the personality of the “Almighty Spirit,” by whom alone that influence is exerted. By the phrase, those who “*hold the head,*” borrowed from Coloss. ii. 19, he evidently means those who hold the substantial and vital articles of the Christian faith, which enter into the very essence of our religion, and which he calls Essentials or Necessaries. Among these, there can be no doubt that he placed the doctrine of the Trinity, and redemption by the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ, as many passages in his writings clearly shew. In 1693, soon after the lamentable contention began, he preached two sermons at the Pinner’s Hall Lecture, from Gal. v. 16, which were published under this title,—“The Carnality of Religious Contention.” In the preface, he says :

“When in one place (Jud. 3.) Christians are exhorted to contend earnestly for the faith ; and in another (2 Tim. ii. 24,) we are told the servant of the Lord must not strive ; ’tis plain, there is a contention for religion which is a duty, and there is a contention, even concerning religion too, which is a sin. We ought to contend for the faith as *earnestly* as you will, but with a sedate mind, full of charity, candour, kindness, and benignity towards them we strive with. Nothing is more evident, or deserves to be more considered, than that, as the Christian Church hath grown more *carnal*, it hath grown more *contentious* ; and as more contentious, still more and more *carnal*. The savour hath been lost of the *great things of the Gospel*, which have less matter in them of dispute or doubt, but which only did afford proper nutriment to the *life of Godliness* ; and it hath diverted to *lesser things*, (or invented such as were, otherwise, *none at all,*) about which the contentious disputative genius might employ, and wherewith it might entertain, feed, and satiate itself.”—pp. ii—iv.

He then proposes this inquiry—

“Whether for any party of Christians to make unto itself other limits of communion than Christ hath made, and hedge up itself within those limits, excluding those whom Christ would admit, and admitting those whom he would exclude, be not in itself a real sin ?”

and proceeds to distinguish between the essentials of Christianity, or wherein it doth consist, and the several accidents it may admit of, and shews that Christ hath in his Gospel expressly represented some things as *of absolute necessity to salvation* ; which he distinguishes into things necessary to be *believed*, and things necessary to be *done*.

“ For thirteen or fourteen hundred years hath the church been gradually growing a multiform, mangled, shattered, and most deformed thing; broken and parcelled into nobody knows how many several sorts of communions: the measures whereof how strangely alien have they been from those which were *genuine and primitive*, i. e. from *substantial Christianity*, and the things that must concur to make up that. Instead of sound knowledge of the *few clear and great things of religion*, a great many doubtful opinions, the taking one side in a disputed point, the determination of a logical question, understanding, or saying one understands (whether we do or no) a metaphysical nicety; and sometimes professing to believe somewhat that Scripture never said, or shews itself never to have meant, and that is most manifestly contrary to all reason and common sense.”—p. xiii.

It must be admitted, that if there was any one of the early Presbyterian ministers\* who exhibited a tendency toward latitudinarianism, it was Howe; and it might have been expected that he was opposed to all doctrinal summaries and declaratory confessions. The contrary, however, was the fact. After expressing his opinion that a general union is hopeless till the addition of unnecessary things can be removed, he proceeds—

“ That only which the present state of things admits of is, that we keep ourselves united, in *mind and spirit*, with all serious Christians, in the plain and necessary things wherein they all agree; that we preserve in our own spirits a resolved unaddictedness to any party in the things wherein they differ; that for *actual and local* communion (which we cannot have with all Christians in the world, and can have, comparatively, but with a few) we join with them that come nearest to us; i. e. that we judge come nearest to our *common rule*: that (as some

\* It appears doubtful whether Mr. Howe agreed with the Presbyterians or the Independents, in his own views of church government. He certainly ranked with the former after the Toleration Act; but in the earlier years of his public life he had been a leading minister among the Independents, and one of Oliver Cromwell's chaplains. Mr. Increase Mather, who succeeded him in the ministry at Great Torrington, Devon, expressly states that his “worthy friend and ancient acquaintance, the reverend and learned Mr. John Howe,” had been “pastor of a Congregational church” at that place.—*The Order of the Gospel professed and practised by the Churches in New England, justified*. 12mo., 1700, p. 13. This most excellent man was pastor for many years before his death of a church which ranked under the Presbyterian denomination, formerly meeting in Silver-street, in a building now occupied by an Independent congregation, under the care of Dr. James Bennett, one of the authors of the History of the Dissenters, published in 4 vols 8vo. 1808-1812, and editor of a second edition, 2 vols. 8vo. 1833.

means hereto) we especially labour to *centre* in some such *scheme of doctrinals* as for which *all these* profess to have a common reverence.

“Such schemes or collections of doctrines, reduced into an order, (as gold formed into a vessel, whereas truth, as it lies in the Holy Scriptures, is as gold in the mass,) may be of use (as they have always been used in the Church in all ages) more distinctly to *inform others* concerning our sentiments, (though the use is less, that after thorough search and inquiry they can be of to one’s self) provided they be avowed to be looked upon but as a *mensura mensurata*, reserving unto the Scriptures the honour of being the only *mensura mensurans*; and so that we only own them as *agreeable to the Scriptures*: and again, that we declare we take them to be agreeable thereto in the main, or *for substance*, without attributing a sacredness to the very words of a mere human composition, which, indeed, we cannot attribute to the words used in the translation of the Bible itself; and that, for the *things*, we believe them with a degree of assent proportionable to their greater or less evidence. This, through the blessing of God, such as have used a sincere and ingenuous freedom with one another, have found an effectual expedient to deliver their minds from mutual doubt, concerning each other, that because of some different modes of expressing their sentiments, they held very different *opinions*; which they have found to be a mistake on one hand and the other, and have given and received satisfaction, they intended nothing that ought to be reckoned into the account of Socinian, Pelagian, Popish, Arminian, or Antinomian errors.”\*

He afterwards says,

“*Heresies* must be understood to be a corruption of *Gospel doctrine*, and, as the word is used in Scripture, mostly of a very high and destructive nature, as Tit. iii. 10, 11. 2 Pet. ii. 1.”†

“No words of Scripture can be plainer, than that they who *believe on Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life*.” John iii. 16. &c.‡

He then quotes various passages, containing the doctrine of life and salvation, “wherein all serious Christians are, and cannot but be, agreed.” The purport of these passages is to shew that faith, repentance, love to God, and obedience to Christ, are necessary to justification and eternal life. He then proceeds—

“We agree that such faith, such repentance, such love to God, such obedience even in the most entire sincerity, are not to be considered at all, as any *cause* of such a person’s acceptance with God. No internal work of the Holy Ghost, though in this our present state, it were most absolutely perfect, so as to exclude every thing of sin, could be any part of that righteousness that must justify us before God. To suppose that it could, would be manifestly to confound the *offices* of the *Redeemer* and of the *Holy Ghost*. It

\* Pp. xx—xxiii.

† Pp. 23, 24.

‡ P. 34.

was Christ that was to merit for us ; it was not the Holy Ghost that died for us, nor can his operations or productions in us have any *causative influence* to the meriting the justified and accepted state of any person before God. They cannot make us never to have sinned, nor can atone for our having done so.

“ We cannot but be agreed in this, for ’tis plain, and carries its own evidence in itself ; i. e. suppose we a person, as soon as he is converted, made perfectly free from sin that very moment, by some extraordinary powerful work of the Holy Ghost on his soul, how shall that expiate for his having been a sinner ? Now, where there are so great things wherein we agree, and we make little of them ; things that should raise up our souls, and awaken all our powers, unto highest acts of love, gratitude, and praise to God and our Redeemer, and fill us with wonder and pleasure,”——\* &c.

These extracts clearly shew, that, among the great things which constituted, in Mr. Howe’s judgment, the substantial of Christian truth, the redeeming work of the Son, and the sanctifying internal operations of the Holy Spirit, were regarded by him as of indispensable necessity to salvation. Is it possible, then, that he should have considered those partakers of “like precious faith through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ,” who “deny the Lord that bought them,” God’s own Son, whose precious blood is the price of human redemption—and that Divine Spirit “by whom (to use his own expression) the whole frame of the Christian institution is animated, into whose name we are baptized, (as well as into that of the Father and the Son,) and which will be given where he is sought for, and not affronted?”† There appears no way of evading the inevitable conclusion, that he would have considered both these errors as “damnable heresies,” and their abettors among those “who bring upon themselves swift destruction.” The reader will observe that I merely use expressions contained in one of the passages which Mr. Howe himself quotes. 2 Pet. ii. 1.

He speaks afterwards of some who may be “wholly taken up about what they are in themselves, to be and do,” without due reference to the *grace*, *Spirit*, and *blood* of a Redeemer, inclining more to a philosophical (and scarcely *Christian*) Christianity, forgetting Christ to be their *Redeemer*, their *Lord*, and *Vital Head*.”‡ In what terms would he have

\* Pp. 35-37.

† Preface, p. xxxi.

‡ Pp. 52, 53.

spoken of those who deny the necessity both of his blood to redeem our souls from destruction, and of the grace of his Holy Spirit to regenerate and sanctify our hearts, and understand not that close union to him, and constant dependence upon him, which form the very element of spiritual life?

Let the reader now decide, whether the distinction between the Presbyterians and the Independents was at this time "chiefly doctrinal;"\* whether the former had renounced, either formally or virtually, those Heads of Agreement on the basis of which they still professed to be desirous of uniting with the latter; whether they did not, on the contrary, adhere with immoveable constancy to the faith of their forefathers? The question, it should be observed, is not whether they were "at liberty to vary from the doctrines of those who preceded them," but whether they did actually so vary; or whether, on the contrary, they did not profess to be clear from the imputation with which they had been charged, of "doctrinal deviations and degeneracy."† May I not, then, safely affirm that, up to the very end of the seventeenth century, there is no evidence of *any* degree of "doctrinal relaxation," among the English Presbyterians from their original standard, the Confession and Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly?

It may be proper to subjoin a brief notice of those Associations among the ministers, in all parts of the country, which arose out of the Union in 1691, and which, it appears, continued to exist in peace and harmony, notwithstanding the lamentable disputes in London, and for many years after they came to an end.‡ They were not designed to establish any general system of government and order, but were what Mr. Neal calls "brotherly associations," formed to promote mutual sympathy and to facilitate friendly co-operation among the ministers residing in particular

\* Hist. p. 35.

† Ibid. p. 36.

‡ There is "reason to conclude that associations were spread over the greater part of England. The dispute about Dr. Crisp's works disturbed the harmony of the meetings in London; but it does not appear to have had any effect on the country associations."—*History of Dissenters*, by Messrs. Bogue and Bennett, vol. ii. p. 140.

counties or districts, in the performance of their official duties, not for the exercise of any kind of authority. Even in Devonshire and Lancashire, which are represented as exceptions, the object, I believe, was in no respect different.

The reader has already been apprised of several associations formed in the west of England, and of the views and purposes of those who took a leading part in them. Similar associations were, there is reason to believe, formed in most parts of the kingdom, in which the ministers, who had been previously distinguished as Presbyterian and Congregational, united, and agreed to merge those terms of distinction in the designation "United Brethren." We are assured that the happy event of 1691 was regarded by ministers belonging to both denominations in various parts of the country, as an auspicious omen of increased efficiency and usefulness. Dr. Williams, at the end of the list of ministers who testified their approbation of his "*Gospel Truth stated and vindicated*," annexed to the second edition, 1692, says, "I am credibly informed, that the most learned country ministers of the *Congregational* persuasion disallow the errors here opposed; and are amazed at such of their brethren in the city as are displeased with this book." The fact, however, is indisputable, that, in those parts of the country where such brotherly associations were formed among the ministers of the two denominations, they continued to meet, consult, and act together, long after the separation among their brethren in London. The title originally assumed in London, (United Brethren,) was that under which these unions were generally formed; and the Heads of Agreement, after having been read and formally assented to, were, in some places, subscribed.

Evidence shall now be produced in support of these statements. Mr. Tong, in his *Life of the Rev. Matthew Henry*, published in 1716, gives the following particular account:—"In the year 1691, the Dissenting ministers in Cheshire agreed to have their General Meetings twice in the year. The Yearly Meetings then set up, I think, took their rise from that Agreement between the ministers of the Presbyterian and Congregational way, that was concluded and published in *London*, and

recommended to all parts of the nation. At the first meeting, [held, it appears, at Knutsford, June 30,] the Articles of Agreement were approved and subscribed; Mr. *Angier* was Moderator, and many things were discoursed of to their mutual satisfaction and advantage. On the 11th of August there was another meeting, to state and settle more fully the methods to be observed for the future.”\*

I have obtained information concerning the origin of the Association of Ministers formed in Lancashire, having been favoured, several years ago, with a sight of the MS. book in which their proceedings are recorded, from which I shall present the reader with a few extracts:—

“Bolton, April 3, 1693.—At a General Meeting of Ministers of y<sup>e</sup> United Brethren, within the county of Lancaster,

“It was agreed—That the Pastors of the several Congregations should set apart a day in May or June next, (as it may consist best with their convenience,) by way of humiliation to confesse before y<sup>e</sup> Lord wherein they have failed, (so far as they are convinced,) and to bewail their past differences and present short-comings, and thankfully acknowledge y<sup>e</sup> Lord’s great goodness in agreeing and carrying them on thus far, according to y<sup>e</sup> pious example of the United Brethren in London.

“2. That for baptizing of children of those that are not fixed members, it shall be left to y<sup>e</sup> pious discretion of the pastors whom to baptize, taking y<sup>e</sup> best care they can for the religious education of y<sup>e</sup> children.

“Signed in y<sup>e</sup> name of y<sup>e</sup> United Brethren, by us,

“HENRY NEWCOME, Moderator.

“CHARLES SAGER, Scribe.”

A General Meeting was held at Bolton, May 7, 1694, at which it was agreed that the ministers should perform the exercise of catechizing publicly.

General Meetings of the “Ministers of the County,” held twice every year, are recorded, during several following years. The last, of which the minutes are entered, was at Manchester, August 13, 1700. At these meetings, various matters pertaining to the welfare of particular congregations, and the general interests of the Nonconformist community, were discussed and agreed upon. A few cases also occur, in which the ministers

\* Pp. 253, 256, 257.



determined matters referred to them for arbitration or advice. The county was divided into four districts, denominated Northern, Bolton, Warrington, and Manchester, the ministers resident in which held separate meetings, investigated particular cases, and prepared the business for the general meetings.

At the General Meeting held at Bolton, April 4, 1696, at which Mr. Frankland (tutor of a large and flourishing academy in Yorkshire) was present, "A letter was signed by the Moderator and Scribe, drawn up by Mr. Jolly,\* and ordered to be sent to the London Ministers, and particularly Mr. Howe and Mr. Mead, to encourage those that endeavour y<sup>e</sup> composing of the present differences depending amongst them." At the meeting, August 10, 1698, a certificate was drawn up and signed "that Thomas Crompton and John Chorlton, both Ministers of the Manchester district, are by us, in the name and with the consent of all the Ministers now assembled for this county, delegated to represent us in the next General Meeting at London." At the meeting held at Preston, April 9, 1700, it was "Agreed, That a Letter be sent to our worthy friends in London, who are concerned in the disposal of the Fund raised by a charitable Contribution for the maintaining of the Ministry, and for propagating the Gospel." The object of this application was to obtain a grant for the benefit of "the northern parts of the county where Popery and prophaneness abound."

There is one instance of something like an attempt to exercise general discipline, but even if such were the design of this Association, it was one in which the Independent Ministers (of whom there were several in that county) united, and from which it does not appear that they withdrew, at least not till a much later period. Mr. Timothy Jollie, minister of a Congregational church at Sheffield, attended the General Meeting, held August 4, 1696, at which the case of a minister removing

\* This was, no doubt, Mr. Thomas Jollie, an Independent Minister. In his Funeral Sermon, printed in 1704, it is said—"The great design which filled his head, hand, and heart, which he left as his dying testimony, was *The Communion in Churches and the Communion of Churches*, as the only available expedient to retrieve the languishing state of Christianity. His heart was entirely in the Heads of Agreement among the Ministers at London, in the year 1691."—p. 27.

from a congregation, upon a call to some other place, was “referred to Mr. Angier, and Mr. Jollie, of Attercliffe, (himself,) upon a hearing of the people of Newton.”\*

Dr. J. B. Williams, of Shrewsbury, to whom the Christian public are much indebted for enlarged and greatly improved editions of the *Lives of Philip and Matthew Henry*, gives the following account of the design of the Cheshire Association:—“The union formed by the ‘Dissenting Ministers’ in Cheshire for Christian edification and the advancement of the Redeemer’s kingdom, had in Mr. Henry a cordial friend, and an able and zealous advocate. That union was formed in 1691, and met twice a year, in May and August; for some time at Knutsford, and Bucklow Hill alternately; but afterwards at Knutsford only. At those meetings, after the work of prayer and preaching was over, the ministers consulted together about the affairs of their several congregations. Whatever difficulties presented themselves in connexion with the admission of any to church membership, or suspension from it, or the removal of ministers from one place to another, were here proposed, and advice was accordingly given. Affairs of the state, or the established church, were never meddled with.”†

In “*The Diary of Ralph Thoresby, F.R.S.*” who was for many years connected with the Presbyterian congregation in Leeds,

\* It has been questioned whether Mr. Timothy Jollie was an Independent. Without reference to other evidence, which might be produced, I will only quote the title-page of his *Funeral Sermon*, by Mr. John De la Rose, 8vo. 1715, in which he is described as “late Pastor to the Congregational church at Sheffield.”

† *Life of Mat. Henry*, pp. 140, 141. The following is Mr. Tong’s own account:—“In these general meetings, after the work of prayer and preaching was over, the Ministers consulted together about the affairs of their several congregations; whatever difficulties they met with about the admission of any to church membership, or suspension from it, about the removal of Ministers from one place to another, they were here proposed, and advice was given how to proceed, but not as authoritatively binding the conscience of any particular person, Minister or other. Affairs of the State, or the Established Church, were never meddled with; they kept themselves within their own line, counselling and comforting each other; and God was pleased to make these their consultations a means of preserving and promoting love, peace, and order amongst them; and this prudent method was kept up by them all the time Mr. Henry lived at Chester, and is continued to this day at the same place.” [*Knutsford.*—Account of the Life and Death of the late Rev. Mr. Matthew Henry, 1716.—p. 258.

published in 1830, from the original MS., under the editorship of Mr. Hunter, we have the following account of the Union formed in Yorkshire.

“September 2, 1691. Morning—at worthy Mr. Sharp’s, with whom, and with Mr. Whitaker, and Mr. S. Ib. (Ibbetson, a lay Dissenter,) rode to Wakefield; heard the lecture sermon; Mr. Heywood preached well, and suitably to the Convention, from Zech. xiv. 9. ‘In that day there shall be one Lord, and his name one.’” Afterwards that good man (itinerant preacher or apostle of these parts) read each of the Heads of the Agreement of the United Ministers in and about London. Most were unanimously assented unto by the brethren of both persuasions; others modestly discussed and explained, and, which I rejoice to observe, without the least passionate expression. The truly Rev. Mr. Frankland and Mr. Sharp in their arguments shewed abundance of learning as well as piety, and were unanswered even in what was not readily assented to by some juniors about synods and reordination. Had the pleasing society of many excellent ministers from all parts of the West Riding.”

“This (says Mr. Hunter) was the first of a series of periodical meetings of the Presbyterian Ministers of the West Riding, in which, for a time, something of the appearance of Presbyterian discipline was maintained. In the Manuscript Remains of Mr. Heywood is a very particular account of what was done in this Assembly: where are also briefer notices of what was done at nine subsequent meetings.” Vol. I. p. 210.

That these were not merely meetings of *Presbyterian* ministers is apparent on the face of the extract, and is rendered unquestionable by one expression—“the brethren of both persuasions.” In the pamphlet now under review, the Association formed in Yorkshire is thus noticed by Mr. Hunter, than whom there is no individual possessed of more particular information concerning Dissenters in that county—“The meeting of the Ministers in the West Riding began in 1691, and has been continued to the present time.”\* He intimates that the Ministers assembled on these occasions originally exercised something like “a regulating power,” and the English Presbyterian Association assert, that in some districts their proceedings were an infringement of that “perfect independence” which generally prevailed;† but evidence is wanting, to shew that in these counties “any attempt was

\* Hist. Def. p. 14.

† Hist. pp. 10, 17.

made to establish a proper Presbyterian form of church union and government."

There is in print "A Sermon, preached at the Provincial Meeting of the Lancashire Ministers at Manchester, May 8, 1744, by James Daye," which shews that these meetings were kept up in that county during many years, as they also were in Cheshire.\* The Unitarian Ministers of these two counties have, for some years past, held meetings in conjunction; but, since the commencement of the present century, the pastors of Independent churches in both counties have met separately, and held no religious intercourse with the Unitarian ministers; and this, I believe, is the case in all other parts of the country, unless, perhaps, Devonshire forms an exception. The Assembly of Ministers, which met annually at Exeter, is, I am informed, yet continued, but most

\* I have been favoured by the Rev. T. Scales, of Leeds, who has for several years been collecting materials for a History of Dissenting Congregations in Yorkshire, with the following copy of a letter in his possession, which will shew that, many years after the period in question, there was a disposition among the Presbyterian Ministers in that county to keep up friendly intercourse with those of the Independent denomination. Mr. William Turner, Minister of the Presbyterian congregation at Wakefield, thus writes to Mr. Scott, an Independent Minister, and Tutor of an Academy at Heckmondwike, about 1760:—

"Rev. Sir,—I am informed that the course of lectures usual in the summer season is to commence this year at Wakefield. I beg leave therefore to inform you, that I have fixed on the 9th of June for that purpose, and to request the favour of your company, if agreeable and convenient to yourself. I remember seeing you at Pudsey on a like occasion the last year, which encourages me to hope for your presence with us at the time mentioned. I doubt not your disposition to maintain brotherly fellowship with all who call on the name of our Lord Jesus out of a pure heart, as I trust we all do; and that this is the design of these lectures, to promote harmony and love among Brethren. To contribute to this in any degree will give great pleasure to, Rev. Sir, your affect: Brother and humble Serv<sup>t</sup>.

"WM. TURNER."

A sermon preached July 4, 1781, at Bradford in Yorkshire, "before an Assemblage of Dissenting Ministers," was published at their request, and respectfully inscribed by the author (Rev. William Wood, of Leeds,) to "the Associated Dissenting Ministers of the West Riding of Yorkshire."

In Lancashire, as I was informed several years ago by an Unitarian Minister of long standing in that county, since deceased, inquiry was formerly made by the Moderator at the annual Meeting, whether the Ministers kept their churches orthodox—or to that effect. He also mentioned, that for several years, this had degenerated into a mere form, and the answer given on one occasion, producing a ludicrous effect, the custom was afterwards dropped.

of the Independent ministers have withdrawn since those professing to be Presbyterians have become decided Unitarians.

Formerly, it appears, the ministers of Somerset united with those of Devonshire, as did also for many years those of Cornwall. An Assembly of Ministers of the counties of Devon and Somerset was held at Exeter, April 16, 1693, when a sermon was preached by Mr. John Bush, who had been ejected by the Act of Uniformity at Langport, which was printed under this title—"The Necessity and Reward of a Willing Mind," from 1 Cor. ix. 17. The following are brief extracts:—

"The *will* must be *fixed*; without this, nothing is done willingly. The great controversy of late hath been, who doth determine the will, *God* by the irresistible operations of his grace, or *man* by making those operations to be effectual? In which controversy, whilst some have given to man more power than in truth is in him, others have gone into another extreme. Those that go in the former extreme, though otherwise very learned men, do so rarely mention the supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit, which are as necessary to deliver the *soul* from the bonds of sin as to release the *body* from the power of the grave at the last day; that, as one saith of the *Socinians*, 'tis hard to call them Hereticks, for they scarce deserve to be called *Christians*; so of these men, 'tis hard to say that they preach *another Gospel*, for they seldom preach *any Gospel*; and yet some have erred on the other hand, as if *God's grace* had so superseded *man's duty*, that there were nothing for us to do, but to look when God will do it, that we may sit still and do nothing. The truth lieth between these two extremes, which will the sooner appear if you consider, that they only are willing, whom God doth make willing; and yet every man that is truly willing, his heart doth stir him up to his own duty, and his own spirit doth make him willing.

"Why should it not suffice us what so many have said in this matter, that the turning of the will is done by moral persuasion, as man is a rational creature, made for moral government; but the efficacy of God's grace lieth in the immediate operations of God's Spirit upon man's will, which is subdued in a way of *power*, as man is a wicked creature, and yet so subdued, that no man is *forced* against his will, but made *willing*; and yet that which makes him so, is not the co-operation of his own will with God's Spirit, but the conquest of the Spirit over the will, which being *effectual*, man shall not be able to resist it; and if he *could*, he *would not*, he is so *drawn* by *love*, as well as *subdued* by *power*. Now, to scorn all this, which in effect so many have done, by saying, how can this be, and man act as a *self-determining* creature, master of his own actions? is to pretend that we can

refine upon every thing that is done in the world, when in the mean time, if we descend into the *manner of things*, we can give account of *nothing*; for though we do all know that we can will, and choose, and refuse, and think, and love, and hate, yet inquire *how* this is done, *how* the soul, that is a *spirit*, doth operate upon the *body*, to move and stir it, and *how* one thought doth beget another, and who can give an account of all this? Why then should we pretend to know *how far* the Spirit of God can operate upon our souls to *incline* us to good, and not destroy that determining principle which is in all men? and therefore it will more become us to believe that which the Scripture is so positive in, though we cannot give an account *how* it is.\*

“As to many of them [the Clergy of the Established Church] we ought to rejoice that the *same* Christ, the *same* Gospel is preached to the people that attend *their* ministry, as is preached by us to the people that attend *ours*; and whilst the contention is whose way is best, who do preach *most suitably to the design of the Gospel*, let us remember, that that Minister doth most answer the design of the Gospel, who doth most preach *love and charity*; and truly that Minister’s charity is not very large, that limits the Catholic Church to his own party, to men of his own mind and way.”†

The Heads of Agreement, as we are informed by Mr. Harmer, a Congregational Minister, author of the “Observations on Passages of Scripture,” formed the model on which the Congregational churches of Norfolk and Suffolk were regulated and their affairs conducted.‡

The associations in Somersetshire, Hampshire, and other western counties, and also in some midland districts, continued for many years after the separation in London, and some of them, I believe, to a comparatively recent period, but I am not furnished with particular accounts of them. At the general meetings, a sermon was always preached by one of the ministers belonging to the association, and several of these discourses were afterwards printed. One publication

\* Pp. 7—9.

† P. 28.

‡ “The correspondence between London and the counties of Suffolk and Norfolk, at that time, is not so well known; but there is the utmost reason to suppose *these Heads of Agreement* were equally adopted there, since the management of the Congregational churches *among us* has been conformable to them as far back as the memory of man reacheth. Whoever, therefore, would acquire a thorough acquaintance with the most perfect scheme of Congregational church government and discipline, or with that at least which has prevailed *among us* for some generations past, should consult those Heads of Agreement.”——Remarks on the ancient and present state of the Congregational Churches of Norfolk and Suffolk. By a Suffolk Minister, Svo. 1777.—A copy of the Heads is inserted in the Appendix.

of this description may serve as a specimen of the rest. In 1723 Mr. John Jennings, an Independent minister, and tutor of an academy at Kibworth-Harcourt, in Leicester-shire, at which the celebrated Dr. Doddridge, and other eminent ministers, were educated, published "Two Discourses on Preaching Christ, and on Particular and Experimental Preaching," which he dedicated "To the United Ministers of the several Congregations of Protestant Dissenters in the Counties of Leicester, Northampton, Warwick, and Rutland." These excellent discourses have been frequently reprinted. Throughout most of the English counties, the original design of the union in 1691 was thus accomplished. The ministers of the two denominations met in brotherly association, and maintained friendly intercourse and communication. The object proposed as the result was attained, and the terms of distinction previously in general use were dropped. We do not find in the title-pages of sermons, and other publications, the ministers of a particular county or district described as Presbyterian or Congregational, nor does it appear that any of the congregations were commonly so designated, except in those places where churches of both denominations existed. The distinction, indeed, in many parts of the country, if it obtained at all, was rather nominal than real, or, at least, was so far matter of indifference, that the same congregation would, without hesitation, invite ministers of either denomination to fill up the vacancies that occurred. The chief note of distinction, which I can trace, is the circumstance of several ministers over small congregations receiving a yearly grant or allowance from the Funds established in London for assisting in the education of students and the maintenance of poor ministers. Originally there was a joint Fund for the two denominations; but, after the greater number of the Congregational ministers had withdrawn, and preferred meeting separately, a distinct fund was established by them, afterwards called the Independent Fund, while that which continued under the management of the remaining portion of the United Ministers assumed the name of "The Presbyterian Fund." I believe the fact of ministers in the country receiving from one of these funds

was the circumstance which (generally speaking) gave distinction to the congregations over which they presided.\* A large portion of the Presbyterian fund, however, has for many years past been distributed among ministers reckoned Congregational, and known to be decidedly orthodox. "It has always (we are told) been a fundamental principle of the Presbyterian fund, not to require any confession or explanation of faith, as a qualification of relief."† This may be correct. I have not the means of obtaining accurate information of the *original* rules of the managers of the fund. If still in existence, they may be produced, and will supply the requisite evidence.‡ That "the Congregational Board, by its standing orders, requires satisfaction to be given that the person applying is sound in the faith, on the doctrine of the Trinity, and on other matters of belief," no one will be surprised to hear, after the lamentable defection from the orthodox faith, on that and other important doctrines, which took place during the latter part of the last century.

\* In 1715 a list was compiled by Dr. John Evans, successor to Dr. Daniel Williams, of Dissenting congregations in all the counties of England and Wales, in which those who received contributions from either of the Funds are distinguished, and in many cases the amount of the annual grant is specified. The list was carried forward till 1729, the year previous to Dr. E.'s death, and contains other particulars, collected probably for some political purpose. It is now deposited in the Library at Redcross-street.

† Hist. p. 19.

‡ I have before me a copy of the "Rules of the Presbyterian Fund," which were acted upon about twenty years ago, and are probably still in force. In these I can find not the slightest allusion to any such fundamental principle. The only regulations bearing upon the point are part of the 6th and the 10th, which follow—

"6. Every petition [from a congregation presented on behalf of a new minister] is also required to be accompanied by a testimonial, signed by two neighbouring ministers known to, and approved by, this Board, to the moral character and other qualifications of the person for whom the allowance is requested.

"10. That two extraordinary supplies be granted annually to ministers—if the circumstances of the Fund will admit. At such periods, each manager present shall be allowed to nominate any minister, belonging to the class of Protestant Dissenters, whom he may think proper, for the sum of £5, without any restriction of sentiment or denomination, but subject to the approbation of the Board."



RESTORATION OF HARMONY AMONG THE LONDON MINISTERS —  
 PROFESSED AGREEMENT OF DISSENTERS IN DOCTRINE WITH THE  
 CHURCH OF ENGLAND—SUBSCRIPTION TO THE DOCTRINAL ARTI-  
 CLES BY DISSENTING MINISTERS — VIEWS ENTERTAINED BY  
 PRESBYTERIANS OF THE RELATION IN WHICH DISSENTERS  
 STAND TO THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH—MODERATION AND LIBE-  
 RALITY OF CONGREGATIONAL MINISTERS — OCCASIONAL CON-  
 FORMITY GENERALLY PRACTISED BY PRESBYTERIANS—THEIR  
 ZEALOUS ADVOCACY OF CATHOLIC COMMUNION—THEIR RESTRIC-  
 TION OF THE RIGHT OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP TO THOSE WHO  
 HOLD THE FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY.\*

THE separation among the united ministers in London, which followed the breach in the Merchants' Lecture, did not long continue. The Independents, it is true, at least the majority of them, continued to hold separate meetings, but the alienation of feeling and affection which had been produced, was in a few years completely removed. A separate Fund was raised, and another Board established; but still, it appears, that some Congregational ministers acted ecclesiastically with their Presbyterian brethren. Of this, one instance, at least, has been recorded. A custom referred to in the Heads of Agreement,\* prevailed for many years, that candidates for the ministry, after completing their academical course, and previously to being allowed to preach, should undergo examination, for the purpose of enabling competent parties to ascertain their ministerial qualifications. In this work it appears that ministers of the two denominations united about the end of the seventeenth century. The eloquent Dr. Grosvenor, we are informed, "entered upon his public work in the year 1699, having first passed his trials before several ministers eminent for their soundness in doctrine and gravity of manners." These were, Mr. John Quick, Mr. John Spademan, Mr. Thomas Rowe,

\* See p. 55, ante.

Mr. Robert Fleming, Mr. Joshua Oldfield, Mr. John Nesbitt, and Mr. William Harris.\* Mr. Rowe and Mr. Nesbitt were eminent Independent ministers, the rest were Presbyterians.

On the accession of queen Anne, in 1702, the Dissenting Ministers of London and the neighbourhood united in presenting an address to her Majesty. Dr. Calamy gives the following account of this memorable fact:—"They made an address to her Majesty, in a large body, made up of the three denominations, Presbyterians, Independents, and Antipædobaptists; and, this being the first time of their joining together in an address at court, it was much taken notice of, and several were surprised, and commended their prudence."† This asso-

\* History of Dissenting Churches, vol. i. 347.

† Historical Account of his Own Life, vol. i. p. 460. There is a passage in the first part of Dr. Calamy's Defence of Moderate Nonconformity, which shews that in the year 1703 the Presbyterian and Independent ministers throughout the country formed one united body, or at least that they generally met and acted together, and this, too, apart from the Baptists. The Rev. Theophilus Dorrington, then a benefited clergyman of the established church, who had himself been educated, and had for some years officiated, as a Dissenting minister, after having forsaken the Nonconformists, basely misrepresented their principles and practices, in reference to "a learned and regular ministry." The following are his words—"Many of them take upon them the office of ministers of religion, who are neither in any measure fit or qualified for this work, nor have any right or title to this office. *The greatest part of the Dissenters by far*, receive and follow such as ministers." Dr. Calamy, after remarking that at least three parts in four must be included in such an expression, and challenging him to produce good evidence of the assertion, thus proceeds—"As to the *Quakers*, they are a considerable body indeed; but I am not so much acquainted with them as to be able certainly to say, whether they have any ministers or no. I can't see any great need they have of them, when they deny both the sacraments. But if he'll rank them with the rest of the Dissenters in his calculation, he would do well to take in the *Romanists* too, who also dissent from the Church of England. Among them he knows ministers abound, and such as his church owns, too, for ministers, tho' we dare not. But if he desires our conviction, he must confine himself to those who are stiled the *United Brethren* and the *Anabaptists*. As to the Anabaptists, there are some among them that are men of good sense and learning. Our author, I believe, would hardly deny that character to Mr. Tombs formerly; or to Mr. Stennett and Mr. Piggot, and some others, at the present, if he were acquainted with them. But whatsoever remains there may be of the ancient aversion to human literature, among those of this denomination, in that dark corner of the country which Mr. Dorrington is endeavouring to enlighten, it is far from prevailing among those

ciation has continued to the present time; and nearly all the ministers of the denomination still called Presbyterian, having been for some years past decided Unitarians, that circumstance has lately excited considerable prejudice, and given rise to much unfounded clamour, against the orthodox Dissenting ministers of the metropolis.

Whether the meetings of the ministers belonging to the three denominations were originally confined, as for many years past they have been, merely to "civil and secular purposes," is a point upon which I am not prepared to communicate precise information. I will, however, mention one or two facts which seem to prove the contrary. In 1703, Mr. John Quick, an eminent Presbyterian minister, published a tract, entitled "A Serious Inquiry into that weighty Case of Conscience, Whether a man may lawfully marry his deceased Wife's Sister," 4to.; the dedication of which, dated London, June 7, "To the truly honoured Sir Samuel Blewitt, of Walthamstow in the County of Essex, knight," thus commences:—"It pleased the R. R. pastors of this city, in one of their synodical assemblies, to request me to give them my thoughts on this difficult subject."\* From this it would appear, if meetings of the whole body are referred to, that they discussed and deliberated upon topics of a religious and moral character, and did not confine their attention to matters arising out of public events, and their intercourse with Government, as for

of this persuasion in other parts. They are generally convinced of the necessity of learning in the ministerial office; and, as an evidence of it, have determined in their general meetings to train persons up in order to the ministry, and give them a polite education; and many have been learnedly brought up, that are now in the ministry among them. As to the *Independents*, I have not one word to say in excuse of those among them who have encouraged raw and unfurnished persons to enter into the ministry; yet I am well assured the body of them are so far from discouraging education and learning, that they are zealous for it. And as to those called *Presbyterians*, (who are far from being such a contemptible handful as Mr. Dorrington represents them,) I can't think them, by what I have observed, generally speaking, less careful as to the qualifications of such whom they own and encourage as ministers, than the Church of England itself," pp. 242—244.

\* In this dedication he says, "There is not a minister of the gospel who doth not, by virtue of his office, lie under an indispensable obligation to destroy sin and save sinners."

many years past has been the case.\* The probability of this will be confirmed by the fact, that for many years after the commencement of the last century, a Latin discourse, in the nature of a *Concio ad Clerum*, was delivered by one of the ministers at their annual general meeting which has been regularly held in Red-cross-street Library, since that building was erected. Of these, I believe the only one which has been printed, was delivered by Mr. Joseph Burroughs, a learned minister of the Baptist denomination, in 1734, on the Holiness of Places, from Isa. lxvi. 1-3, which is annexed to a volume of sermons published by him in 1741.† These anniversary orations have been discontinued many years; and there is now, I believe, nothing in the meetings of the ministers at Red-cross-street, which involves or implies “any religious union or communion” among the members of that association.

In the metropolis, at least, it appears quite evident, that the only circumstance which was generally regarded as constituting, the distinction between Presbyterian and Independent congregations, was the funds to which they made their annual contribution. I will give two instances, recorded by Mr. W. Wilson, of a change in this respect, as illustrative of the general fact—“This church, (New Court, Carey-street,) in its original constitution was strictly Presbyterian; and till the time of Mr. Bradbury, the ministers carried the contributions of the society to the Presbyterian fund. Mr. Bradbury, however, made it a condition of his acceptance of the pastoral office, that the people should join the Independents, and send their contributions to the Independent fund: and this has been its state ever since. There has been no material alteration in this people, as to doctrinal sentiment, from their origin as a church.”‡ Hence it would appear that a Presbyterian church “joined the Independents” by merely transferring its annual collection to the fund raised by the latter denomination.

\* See an admirable Letter to Professor Lee, annexed to a Sermon on the Temper to be cultivated by Christians of different denominations towards each other. By John Pye Smith, D.D. p. 44.

† “De locorum sanctitate. Oratio Anniversaria ad coetum Theologorum in Bibliotheca Gulielmiana, a.d.x. cal. Junias MDCCXXXIV. habita a Josepho Burroughs.

‡ History of Dissenting Churches, vol. iii. pp. 493, 494.

The congregation at the Weigh House, Eastcheap, which for many years had made the largest collection for the Presbyterian fund of any in London, except the one at Salters' Hall, soon after the settlement of their late venerable minister, the Rev. John Clayton, senior, "carried their contributions for country ministers to the Congregational Fund," which Mr. Wilson also expresses by using the same phrase—"joined the Independents." In point of religious sentiment (he adds) there has been but little variation among their successive pastors.\*

The Independents agreed with the Presbyterians in duly estimating the value of a learned and well-educated ministry, and largely contributed to promote this important object. At a very early period after the Act of Uniformity, private academies were set up by several ejected ministers, for the education of students for the ministry, and of other young men, whose parents preferred their being trained in what was called "university learning" under pious tutors, who could exercise a vigilant superintendence over their morals and behaviour. Of these, the largest, and, I believe, the most celebrated, was that kept by Mr. Richard Frankland, at several places successively, in the North and West Ridings of Yorkshire. He educated above 300, of whose names, with the dates of their admission, a complete list is preserved in print.† Both Mr. Hunter and the English Presbyterian Association have spoken of "the Presbyterian academies,"‡ but that phrase, at least in reference to those institutions which existed during the period in question, is certainly inaccurate; for they were, without exception, equally open to persons belonging to both denominations. Among Mr. Frankland's pupils were several sons of Independent ministers and others, who afterwards became pastors of Congregational churches. Of these one of the most eminent was Mr. Thomas Whitaker, pastor of the Independent church in Call Lane, Leeds, which, after

\* Hist. Dissenting Churches, vol. i. p. 149.

† Annexed to a Funeral Sermon for the Rev. Daniel Maddock, of Uttoxeter, by Dr. E. Latham, 8vo. 1745.

‡ Hist. Def. pp. 25, 51.

the death of his son, the Rev. Thomas Whitaker, M.A. (who officiated as minister about fifty years, and resigned in 1776,) became, and, I believe, still continues, an Arian congregation. Another was Mr. Timothy Jollie, of Sheffield, who succeeded Mr. Frankland as tutor, and who, like his father, Mr. Thomas Jollie, of Lancashire, and other members of the same family, was an Independent. I admit, however, that his academy is incorrectly styled "the Independent College at Attercliff."\* Thus to designate it is equally inaccurate, as to call Mr. Frankland's a "Presbyterian Academy." Yet I will not retort Mr. Hunter's charge, and say, "It is called so for a purpose." The object of the present investigation is to ascertain facts, and to establish them by producing suitable evidence; not to allege personal imputations. It is true, that several of Mr. Jollie's students became Presbyterian ministers; but among those who settled over Independent churches are to be found the names of Thomas Bradbury, his brother Peter Bradbury, John Sladen, Timothy Jollie, the tutor's son, all afterwards pastors of Congregational churches in London, and, I believe, several others.

The tutors who belonged to the race of ejected ministers were generally Presbyterians, but some of the most eminent of their immediate and next following successors were Independents. In confirmation of this statement, it will be sufficient to mention the names of Thomas Rowe, John Jennings, Thomas Ridgley, D.D. John Eames, F.R.S. David Jennings, D.D. and Philip Doddridge, D.D.

Where does the reader now find the least trace of that broad and palpable line of demarcation which, according to the writers under review, separated these two kindred denominations—a line, or rather a barrier, which neither of them was willing to pass? Is there the least shadow of proof, that a very few years after the commencement of the last century, the Presbyterians were "a class who had long been separated from the Independents,"† with whom they could hold no friendly intercourse, and sustain no fraternal alliance?

\* Hist. Def. pp. 76, 77.

† Ibid. p. 30.

"Identity,"\* may not be accurately descriptive of the real state of things. An incorporating union was not intended from the first, but the reciprocation of brotherly feelings,—united counsel, and harmonious co-operation in the prosecution of their ministerial labours. In London, this met with a serious interruption for several years, nor could the original breach be completely healed; for some attempts to effect a union of the lectures at Pinner's and Salters' Halls were unsuccessful. But although these lectures continued to be held separately, others were founded, in which the ministers of both denominations jointly officiated. One of these was established in 1707, at the Weigh-House, on Friday evening, in which Mr. Thomas Bradbury, a well-known and zealous Independent, was associated with Drs. Wright, Grosvenor, and other Presbyterian ministers.† They also united in other religious services, considered the churches over which they presided as related to each other in bonds of close affinity, and interchanged ministerial offices.

Mr. Peirce speaks of the Independents, in 1718, in the following terms:—"It must be owned, that the ingenious and learned Mr. *Ainsworth*, and some other of the old Brownist writers, used many expressions, in their writings against their adversaries, which were scandalously harsh and severe; with which it would be very unreasonable to charge the Independents in after-times. They only now differ from us in some notions relating to the discipline of the church; and that difference daily abates. Nor is Mr. *Spanheim* mistaken in his judgment, who calls them *pious and orthodox*;‡ and says, they only differ from the Presbyterians in what I just now mentioned.§

\* Hist. p. 35.

† It may here be mentioned, that the author of a Dictionary of all Religions, published in 1704, and generally ascribed to a celebrated Dissenter, (Daniel Defoe,) under the head "Independents," refers, "for a more particular account of their principles and agreement with the Presbyterians, to the Heads concerted among them both in 1691," which he inserts nearly at length. The same reference to the Heads of Agreement is made in "the second edition, with very large additions, 1723."

‡ Church Controv. p. 90.

§ Vindication of the Dissenters, 2d edition, p. 208. Mr. Peirce, it should be observed, was himself a real Presbyterian.

I have admitted that the more liberal divines among the Presbyterians, such as Baxter and Howe, were opposed to the rigid exaction, and still more to the penal enforcement, of subscription to creeds, articles, and confessions, composed by uninspired, and therefore fallible, men, and expressed in mere human phraseology. The reader's attention must now be directed to a fact which may appear to be at variance with that concession, but of which there is ample proof—that for many years after the passing of the Toleration Act, the most eminent individuals among the Presbyterian ministers readily complied with the requisition contained in that act, of subscribing the doctrinal articles of the Established Church, as the condition of being allowed to officiate under the protection of law, and of being released from the proscription of the persecuting acts of Charles II. The consistency of their conduct with the professed principle of their leaders, it is not my business to explain; yet I may suggest a few things for the consideration of the reader. The question concerning the lawfulness and propriety of requiring subscription to human creeds and articles had not then excited general attention, or undergone formal discussion, as a separate branch of argument, involving an important principle; at least, it does not appear that any class of Dissenters opposed *all* kinds of subscription. If, moreover, there were some grounds of objection, there were also reasons for compliance, which might appear to them to possess still greater force; and I am inclined to think that such was the case. They probably considered the practical advantage of openly professing their doctrinal agreement with the church by law established, a motive of sufficient strength to countervail an objection merely theoretical, and founded on abstract principle. The Presbyterians especially, or at least a large portion of them, who were then desirous of being included in a scheme of comprehension, could scarcely have objected to this demand, with which, in that event, they, no doubt, were prepared to comply. However, the fact is notorious—that they *professed*, at the time of this act passing, and for many years after, to agree with the Established Church in doctrine, and this profession was unquestionably accordant



with their real sentiments and convictions. The fact, indeed, was not only avowed by themselves, but admitted even by their enemies \*

\* The evidence of this fact is abundant. A few testimonies may be here inserted :—

“ And here, Sir, you must own, as to *Doctrine*, that the Dissenting Ministers, by their Subscriptions, plainly shew there is *no separation* on their part ; and, indeed, those that are acquainted with the *preaching* and *writing* on both sides, will easily judge who keep closest to the doctrinal articles. The separatists from the Church of England then, in this sense, are, on the one hand, the *Socinians* and *Arminians*, by what names or titles soever dignified or distinguished, and on the other hand, the poor deluded *Quakers*, and such like enthusiasts.

“ In *Doctrine*, there is no separation at all on the Dissenters’ part ; rather are they the truest sticklers for the doctrinal articles.”—*Notes upon the Lord Bishop of Salisbury’s four late Discourses*, 4to. 1695, pp. 16, 20.

In 1700, several tracts were published in answer to “ the Cases to recover Dissenters to the Communion of the Church of England.” These were written by Dr. Collinges, of Norwich, and other eminent Presbyterian divines, and contain many passages which might be produced in proof of this point :—I will insert two—

“ We must consider what communion it is with the Church of England which is required ; and for the withdrawing of which, Dissenters are stigmatized with the unintelligible names of *Schismaticks* and *Separatists*. Is it for their not agreeing with the Doctrines of Faith expressed in the Thirty-nine Articles ?—or because the Doctrine of our Church presseth a necessity of an holy life in order to salvation ?—or because she is fully constituted for devotion, &c. ? There is nothing less true.” *Examination of a Discourse concerning Edification*, pp. 4, 5.

“ We would willingly know what *unity* it is they plead for. Is it an union in *Doctrines* ? We have often enough professed ourselves, in heart, to believe all Doctrines of Faith contained in the Holy Scripture, particularly those in the Articles of the Church of England, so far as concerneth Doctrine.”—*Animadversions upon Dr. [Benj.] Calamy’s Discourse concerning a scrupulous Conscience*, p. 28.

The following is from “ Three Questions of present Importance modestly resolved, &c. [on the proper Treatment of the ‘ Presbyterian Party’ by the State, and in favour of an ‘ Accommodation,’] 4to. 1702 :—

“ As touching holy Doctrine, they both receive the nine-and-thirty Articles of the Church of England, unless that one side may demur upon one or two passages respecting the form of ecclesiastical government and ceremonies, being the matters now in question, and remote from the foundation. And in very deed, the Doctrine of the English Bishops in general, that lived in the elder times of Protestantism—as Jewel, Pilkington, Babington, and of the later Bishops their followers, as Abbot, Carleton, Morton, Usher, Hall, Davenant—is entirely embraced by the Presbyterians ; whereas many of the later prelatists departed from it in the great points of predestination, redemption, free-will, effectual grace, perseverance, and assurance of salvation, and termed it *Puritan Doctrine*.” p. 33. The writer, it appears from pp. 47, 48, was against “ forced large subscriptions,” which he considered unnecessary in order to the attaining of unity in doctrine.

The English Presbyterian Association assert that, "this restriction, [this "*coercive* subscription," as they represent it,] was offensive to the greater number of Dissenters, especially to those of the Presbyterian party;" and also "that where subscription could not be avoided, it was no doubt often evasive."\* "It is notorious," says Mr. Cooper, "notwithstanding some writers amongst the Independents have asserted that Churchmen and Dissenters were nearly of the same mind in matters of religion;—I say, it is notorious to those who have studied the ecclesiastical history of the Revolution, that the bulk of the Dissenters of the three denominations who came in and made this declaration and subscription, entertained opinions upon many of the doctrines comprehended in those Articles, at variance with those of our divines."† He then refers, as an example, to Baxter, who "alleged that many of the expressions in the Articles were dubious," and mentions his "Sense of the subscribed Articles," of which I have already spoken.‡ Mr. Cooper describes this as "a document which, *it is said*, proves that his sentiments upon many points were estranged from those which the Church regards as orthodox; and Calamy states that many of Baxter's brethren concurred in this explanation." Those by whom Mr. Cooper was instructed might have referred him to the document, and thus enabled him to judge for himself, and speak of it from his own knowledge. Mr. Cooper, however, placing full reliance, it appears, on the accuracy of his instructions, exhibits no lack of confidence in speaking upon this point. "The fact is," he proceeds—"and here, again, I am aware that some Independent writers have asserted differently—have asserted that the three denominations did not consider this obligation to sign a human creed a hardship, that no complaints were made, no burden was felt;—I say, notwithstanding these assertions, the fact is incontestable, that the Dissenters in general signed the Articles with great reluctance; and those who did not, like Baxter, avow that they interpreted them differently from the Established Church, pleaded as an excuse for a step, which was, to say the least, of

\* Hist. pp. 15, 16.

† Substance of Speech, p. 66.‡

Pp. 41—44, ante.

very doubtful honesty, the urgent necessity of their situation.”\* I am not about to introduce the opinions entertained on this point by “the three denominations” generally, or to bring forward any extracts from the books of “Independent writers.” The only evidence I shall produce, is that of persons who ranked among Presbyterians, and were eminent in that connexion. But the testimony advanced by the English Presbyterian Association may first be noticed. After asserting that “the great body of Nonconformists did not subscribe,” they quote from a book, or manuscript, called “A Journey in the West of England,” a conversation there reported as having taken place at an interview between the writer, who is merely described as “Mr. Fox, a student of the Dissenting ministry,” and Dr. Calamy, who, after relieving his mind from all apprehension as to any injurious result of not subscribing the Articles, provided only he kept the circumstance a secret, acknowledged that “*he* had never taken them.”† Now let us hear Dr. Calamy’s own account of this matter, which looks rather suspicious against him, as here reported; it is therefore but fair that he should be permitted to speak for himself. These are his words:—

“Mr. *Olyffe* lays a mighty stress upon the subscription of the Nonconformists to 36 of the 39 Articles, in order to their being capable of the benefit of the Act of Toleration. In this, he intimates, we could not comply, if we did not put *the best construction on the Articles that the words will bear*. Upon which occasion I shall not stick to declare, that, finding subscriptions so apt to create debates instead of composing them, I care not how few of them I meddle with. The freer I keep myself, I reckon I am so much the safer. But when I do subscribe to any human composure, I do it only to the substance, and what appears to me the design; and I am very ready to put the best sense upon any phrases that are seemingly harsh, that the words will bear, and which is not otherways precluded; and I’ll own that a like method is but reasonable as to the terms of conformity. But then, as I would never subscribe the Articles if I did not think them fairly reconcileable to truth; or would give my sense in matters that were dubious, before I subscribed them; (which, by the way, many of us did;) so neither would I bind myself to compliance with the terms of conformity, if I were not satisfied in every particular to act agreeably; unless room were left for a dispensation, which is what I cannot observe.

\* Substance of Speech, pp. 66, 67.

† Hist. p. 16.

“He very pleasantly will suppose, that I had forgotten that we Nonconformists had subscribed the Articles. But had he acted according to his own rule, of *interpreting words in the most favourable sense*, he’d have spared that insinuation. For though I, from Mr. Baxter and others, bring in an objection against the *damnatory clauses of the Athanasian Creed*, which *creed* is subscribed to in the 8th Article; yet he might, without the least stretch, have been so favourable as to have supposed, that I looked upon those *damnatory clauses* as not belonging to the subscription. And I here give it him under my hand, that had I not been satisfied as to that, nothing would have prevailed with me to have subscribed that Article. And does Mr. Ollyffe really think there is no difference between the creed, *the Catholic faith*, and those *damnatory clauses* that are as the hedges of the creed? Is there not an express distinction made? After the prefatory introduction, it is said, *The Catholic Faith is this*, &c. That faith we thoroughly receive. But certainly this is somewhat different from being obliged, by an *unfeigned assent and consent*, to use this creed, with its introductory and conclusory sentences, in the worship of God.\*

He afterwards declares in unequivocal terms, that “the ejected ministers were generally of that sense, and says, that therein he heartily concurred with them.” After stating that while they “thoroughly received the substance of that creed, they yet abhorred its appendages—the *damnatory clauses* ;” he adds,—“this very sense of the 8th Article was given in by

\* In 1706, a tract was printed, (4to.) entitled, “The Balm of Gilead; or, the Reconciler and Composer of the present Differences and unhappy Divisions among us;” addressed to Queen Anne, to both houses of Parliament and Convocation, and to all sober Churchmen and Dissenters. The writer, who describes himself “E. E. a true Friend of the Church and Kingdom of England,” thus expresses the sentiments of Dissenters concerning this creed:—

“As to Athanasius’s Creed, they look upon it to be very peremptorily expressed, with a *Quicumque vult*; whosoever will be saved, &c. They profess to be as remote from *Arianism*, *Sabellianism*, *Socinianism*, or any other Heresy, ancient or modern, against the Divinity of Christ and the Holy Ghost, and the plenary redemption and satisfaction of our Saviour, as any in the world; and that they believe all the fundamental articles of the Athanasian Creed as Gospel truths; but they do not approve such a dogmatical and magisterial way of rehearsing it, as he took in the inditing it. They say he was but a man, and therefore he might err, though he is sainted; and they further argue, from his being canonized by the Church of Rome, and our using his Creed in his own words, that we go too near the popish doctrine of infallibility. However, some small matters being altered, as to the manner of expressing it, they allow this creed may be conveniently used on occasion.”—p. 31.

many of us as an explication of our subscription, before we could be satisfied to subscribe.”\* He afterwards addresses his opponent in these terms:—“I hope you will not think I subscribed in my sleep.”† Such language the author could scarcely have used consistently with a due regard to truth, had he not himself actually subscribed.

In 1702, Mr. Nathaniel Taylor, minister of the flourishing Presbyterian congregation which then met at Salters’ Hall, and one of the preachers of the lecture held there, a very brisk and lively writer, whom Dr. Doddridge calls “the Dissenting South,” published a small book, entitled, “Dr. Sherlock’s Cases, and Letter of Church Communion, (lately summed up in the Abridgment of the London Cases,) considered, and the Dissenters vindicated from the Charge of SCHISM.” In this shrewd and spirited performance, the author proves, from the Doctor’s own principles, that the body of Dissenters were then a part of the Catholic Christian church, having been admitted by baptism into the same common gospel covenant, praying to the same common Father, in the name of the same common Saviour, for the same common blessings for themselves and all other Christians, and celebrating the Lord’s Supper as the common feast of Christians. “These (he says) being acts of Catholic communion, we are in communion with the whole Catholic church, and therefore we are not *schismatics*, nor do we divide from the Christian church, though we are reproached as if we did.” Dr. Sherlock having admitted that a person living in actual communion with a *sound and orthodox* part of the Catholic church is in communion with the whole Christian church, Mr. Taylor avails himself of that acknowledgment, as follows:—

“Now, our churches are a *sound and orthodox* part of the church, if the doctrinal Articles of the Church of England are sound and orthodox, which we have subscribed to; and perhaps with somewhat more sincerity than some others have done. We are willing our churches should be tried by the definition of a church which we have in the 19th article of the Church of England—*The visible church of*

\* Defence of Moderate Nonconformity, part ii. 8vo. 1704. pp. 106, 107, 264, 265.

† *Ib.* p. 266.

*Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure word of God is preached and the Sacraments be duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.* Now, I hope the generality of our members may pass for faithful men, as well as the generality of the members of diocesan churches. We appeal to all the world, whether the *pure word of God* is not preached, and the sacraments duly administered according to *Christ's ordinance*?—though we don't baptize according to the *church's ordinance*, excluding the parents, and superadding the sign of the cross; nor impose the posture of kneeling in the Lord's Supper. And we believe our brethren dare not say these things are *of necessity requisite* to the same, so that it should be *no baptism* for want of godfathers or the cross; and no *Lord's Supper*, because we don't oblige men to kneel when they receive it. So, then, our author has furnished us with an argument to prove himself and the generality of his brethren to be notorious schismatics from the Catholic church, because they refuse even so much as occasional communion with our sound and orthodox churches which are in the places where they live.”\*

Referring afterwards to the state of religious parties in Scotland, he says—“ I suppose the Scotch Presbyterian Church may pass for a sound and orthodox one; their Confession of faith has been so esteemed hitherto, and I don't know that they have thrown aside their old one, and set up a new heretical one in its stead.”†

In the preface, he says, “ The learned bishop of Salisbury, (Dr. Burnet,) as though he had laid aside his usual candour, ranks us with *Atheists, Socinians, and Papists*; though I believe he can't think we deserve to be *bound up* in the same bundle with them.”‡

He subsequently quotes the language of Dr. Clagget—(speaking of the Church of England)—“ She doth not unchurch those parts of Christendom that hold the unity of the faith; no, not that church itself, the Church of Rome, which hath added thereto so many erroneous innovations;” and adds, “ We desire the eager sons of the church to use the milder language of their mother, and not to unchurch and unchristian us, who hold the *Unity of the Faith* without any erroneous innovations.”§

\* Pp. 44—46.

† P. 51.

‡ P. iii.

§ P. 92.

As a specimen of the author's facetious manner, (not always, it must be confessed, in keeping with the grave and serious nature of his subject,) I will subjoin a few sentences which precede a very important passage, which they will also serve more clearly to explain.

After quoting Dr. Sherlock's acknowledgment, that all the Christian churches in the world, which retain the essentials of the true faith and worship, are members of Christ's one mystical body, Mr. Taylor brings forward his assertion, that "men not living in constant communion with a sound part of the Catholic church, separate from the whole church, because the communion of the church is but one," and thus proceeds in reference to that assertion—

"These are not passages dropt on the bye, but some of the main stamina of his discourse. This is the sandy foundation of his cruel sentence against us—'That we have forfeited our interest in the covenant of grace, and have no right to the blessings of it;' for they are confined to the Catholic church, from which we poor creatures are broken off, because we don't live in constant communion with the Church of England! And this is his great medium, to prove that 'constant communion is a necessary duty, where occasional communion is lawful'; and the great step on which he advances his beloved assertion, 'That 'tis necessary to continue in constant communion with the Established Church of England;' which he thus triumphantly brings in: 'Now, if these things be true, which I have so plainly proved, then it will easily be made appear,' &c.; whereas he has plainly proved nothing, but that he can contradict himself as well as the truth, and the most famous divines of his own church. His very *subject* is contagious to him. He has written so long about SCHISM, that he is the furthest of any man alive from *unity with himself*. 'Tis natural for every man to imitate the object which he adores. This doctor hath made to himself a God of *Three Minds*;\* 'tis no wonder if we often find him of *two*.

"Besides these great clergymen, I shall produce three emperors as vouchers for us, viz. *Gratian*, *Valentinian*, and *Theodosius*; to whom I may add the Emperor *Justinian*, as a fourth;† for he has confirmed, and put into his *Code*, that law of theirs, wherein they command all their subjects to follow that religion which the apostle Peter delivered to the

\* The reader will understand this allusion to Dr. Sherlock's hypothesis, in explanation of the Trinity.

† Code Just. l. i. de *Summa Trinit.* &c. Tit. i. Cunctos populos, &c.

Church of *Rome*, and which Pope *Damasus* and *Peter of Alexandria* did follow; *i. e.* That they believe the Trinity, according to the Apostolical and Evangelical Doctrine. And they require, that all who do so shall embrace the name of *Christian Catholics*; but all others they brand as mad, wild *heretics*, fit to be destroyed by God and man. Now, *St. Jerome* tells us what *Damasus's* faith was as to this particular;\* and *Peter's of Alexandria* may be seen also;† both of which, I suppose, will be allowed to be orthodox ones. And if soundness in the doctrine of the Trinity be the test of men's being *Christian Catholics*, WE shall come off well enough; but the doctor had need to look about him.‡

The following passage will shew how remote the author was from any narrow, sectarian feeling:—

“ This I dare to say, that if a man be a true believer on our Lord Jesus Christ, a fearer of God, and a worker of righteousness, whether he be a Church of England man, a Presbyterian, an Independent, or an Anabaptist, he shall be saved. Let him get the best directions he can, and walk charitably according to the best light he has; and not be disturbed at the hideous noise of our ecclesiastical bigots; but let him know, for his own comfort, that however these bold men may sit in judgment upon him now, they shall not do so at the last day. The world shall then be judged in righteousness, *by one only man*, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is also *God over all, blessed for evermore*. Amen.” †

I will now transcribe a curious passage, to shew the views and sentiments which then, I believe, generally prevailed among the Presbyterians, concerning the relation in which Dissenters stood to the Established Church:—

“ The plain truth of the case is, the King and Parliament are the makers and the head of the Church of England; and I think they have a just power to rule their own creature; and our Convocation, in the true notion of it, are but their ecclesiastical council. Now, King, Lords, and Commons have granted us a toleration; and the collection of all the churches, whether conformists or nonconformists, are the Church of England, united under one civil government. Our conformable brethren, indeed, are the church *triumphant*: they have the temples, and the tythes, and other large revenues, by the law of the land. We live by the voluntary contributions of our people, which we have a right to, in the general, only by the law of God. They are

\* *Op. Tom. 4. p. 42, Edit. Erasmi.*

† *Trip. Hist. l. 7, c. 37; l. 8, c. 14.*

‡ Pp. 94—98.



the elder sister, who has a large fortune ; we like the younger ones, who were not so kindly dealt with. But we neither envy nor murmur ; we only plead, that merely because we are poor, we should not be called bastards, and, as such, kicked out of the family. Authority has made them a church ; but the same authority has given us a permission to form ourselves into churches ; so that we stand on the same ground, though not on the [same] level with them ; and the cry of the church's jurisdiction and authority over us, and of rebellion against her, is quite turned out of doors.\*

A learned and eminent Presbyterian Minister in Lancashire, Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Charles Owen, of Warrington, published, in 1715, a tract entitled, "Plain Dealing; or Separation without Schism, and Schism without Separation, exemplified in the Case of Protestant Dissenters and Church-men," which, containing a development of an important principle in a compendious form, and illustrated by a brief sketch of historical facts, attracted considerable attention, and passed through several editions in the same year. In a dedication addressed to the moderate and genuine sons of the Church of England, which thus commences—"I stile you *genuine sons of the*

\* The above passage is a remarkable anticipation of Lord Mansfield's doctrine concerning the position which Dissenting congregations occupy in the eye of the law, as equally established with those of the Episcopal Church, having the direct sanction and countenance, the special protection, though not the favour and patronage, of the legislature. Nor is there anything in the Act of Toleration to support a different representation. It contains no proscription of Dissenters, as schismatics ; it regards and treats them as members of the Established Church, whom the State thenceforth permits to meet for the worship of God in separate assemblies, where that worship may be conducted in the mode which they prefer, by ministers of their own choice and appointment. Indeed, the whole ecclesiastical system proceeds on the principle, that Dissenters belong to the Established Church. How otherwise could they be amenable to her spiritual courts for the exercise of discipline, or be liable to the payment of church-rates and other ecclesiastical dues ? The act, it is true, seems to call in question the validity of their ministers' ordination ; but even that is so cautiously expressed, that no decisive inference can be drawn from it, unfavourable to the view above given. The words are, "persons *in holy orders*, pretended holy orders, or pretending to holy orders." Those who framed this act of parliament, intended, it would appear, to leave the matter undetermined, at least to leave it, without interposing any decision on the part of the legislature.

*church*, because of your Christian moderation, charity being the essential characteristic of a true Protestant;" he takes similar views as those of Mr. Taylor, of the relation subsisting between Dissenters and the Established Church, or rather the State, as a few extracts will shew—

"The distracting divisions this nation has so long laboured under, have been fomented mostly by the fury of a set of men, who, by their intemperate zeal for the *shell* of religion, beyond any concern for the *substance* of it, and their rigorous imposition of an impracticable Uniformity, have so far outflowed the true intention of the Church, as justly to acquire to themselves the appellation of *Highflyers*. Not only the Dissenters have suffered by these furious incendiaries, but the Church herself has received a manifest prejudice, by being mistaken among foreign Protestants for a persecuting church, on account of the violent procedures of such men, in enjoining human rites with more rigour than essentials themselves could demand; since force in religion is professedly disclaimed among Protestants as an anti-scriptural practice.

"To palliate their wholesome severities, (as they affect to call them,) we are branded with the odious name of Schismatics; but it is observable that none are more forward in this charge than such, who, from their notorious enmity to the law of love, are errant schismatics themselves. That man (say they) is a schismatic, because he does not worship where we do; that fellow a heretic, because his faith is not of the same dimension with ours. Our church is established by law, therefore we are certainly in the right; the Dissenters are only tolerated, therefore they are in the wrong, &c. This is generally the cant of the high-flying faction, however differently modified in their various invectives, not considering that the Ecclesiastical Establishment, as different from us, does finally resolve itself into Acts of Parliament. I appeal to you, gentlemen, who are the brightest ornaments of the Church, whether the treatment we have all along met with for our conscientious Nonconformity, be agreeable to the rules of Christianity, good policy, or the privilege of a free-born people, since our dissent is not from any essential part of the Doctrine or Worship of the church, but only from some accidents, which, as circumstantiated, we (after the most impartial search) think to be unlawful; so that we do not voluntarily leave the Church, but are driven out. And yet in that case, we don't forsake communion with her in any one instance wherein she is the Church of Christ, I mean in opposition to human establishment; if therefore we can shew a just cause for our separation from her, in things not divinely instituted, the common charge of schism must necessarily cease.

“The design of the following treatise is to justify the modern Protestant Dissenters, who are sound in the Faith, though in the body of the book I usually mention the Presbyterians only, it being the party mostly levelled at by our adversaries in all their attacks upon Nonconformists.

“I’ll only add, gentlemen, that as we have always heartily joined with you in opposition to Popery, in all its shapes and advances, so now the end of all our struggles being obtained (in the happy and glorious accession of our great deliverer [George I.] to the throne,) we hope your best endeavours will not be wanting to strengthen the Protestant interest, by enlarging the pale of the church, wherein nothing should be made necessary to communion but what is necessary to salvation, since the gates of the church ought to be no narrower than those of heaven.”

The tract itself commences with these words—“The English Protestant Dissenters agree with the Established Church in all the Essentials of our Religion, and circumstances and acts of worship too, as far as they are agreeable to the word of God; the difference only consists in the imposition of a few controverted accidents and human modes, which the church accounts *indifferent*, and we, for several reasons, *unlawful*. Have we not the same God and Saviour, as the object of our faith, with the Church?” &c.

The learned author, after disproving from scripture the unwarrantable claim of authority on the part of the church, to impose indifferent things in divine worship, as a religious test and term of communion, especially when they are offensive, much more to punish persons for their noncompliance with them; and stating that when such things were first imposed, a general corruption in doctrine and discipline immediately ensued, proceeds to shew that separation from the Established Church is lawful in a *political* sense, when allowed by the government, which he thus proves—“The terms of distinction between us and the Church as they are imposed, are not ecclesiastical but civil, i. e. the imposition of them is merely a civil act, since the *Church* of England by law established is altogether dependent upon the State, and all her canons, constitutions, orders, &c. and any thing else that distinguishes her from other Protestant Churches, derive their force from acts of parliament, which acts are of the constitution no otherwise than other acts of parliament. Now the terms of communion required by the Church of England being purely political and parliamentary, the Protestant Dissenting churches may, without schism, separate from such political parliamentary terms, if the king and parliament give such liberty by law. Time was when such who scrupled the ceremonies of the Church continued to be legal members of her, even before *Oliver’s usurpation*, and had still been so, but for the rigour of certain statutes enacted against them, by virtue of which they were

turned out of the church, and punished for worshipping God in a mode different from the established worship.\* The government finding the inconvenience of those penal laws, did not only repeal them, but, by the Act of Toleration, allowed of our separation as legal. We appeal to *Cæsar*; we are subjects to the State, and not to the national Church, who having no external jurisdiction but what she derives from the State, can't demand subjection from such whom the State exempts; and if she charge such with schism, she charges the government, by which she stands, with the same crime of establishing iniquity by a law.†

“Neither are we in reality schismatics from the *English Church*. I can't see how we cease to be *members* of the church, since what we forsake in the church is not of the *Essence* of it. We may be parts of the Church, though we don't join with it in all its ceremonious observances. Since then we agree with the Church in the great essentials of Christianity, and differ from her only in some of her ceremonies, we can't justly be termed schismatics, unless the ceremonies be made more of her essence than the Fundamentals of our Religion. [He then quotes the 11th Canon, which asserts, *that such congregations that are allowed by the law of the land, are true and lawful churches*; and the definition of a visible church of Christ, given in the 19th Article, to prove that their societies are true churches.] Our separation as such, is *forced*, and not *voluntary*, for we are obliged to depart from the Church by force of certain laws, that impose terms of conformity which we can't with a safe conscience comply with. We would much rather be in the Church, and would gladly purchase our readmission at any rate but at the expense of *conscience* and *truth*. We don't separate for separation-sake, but are *driven* out by oaths, subscriptions, declarations, statutes, &c. concerning the reasonableness of which we could never yet see a convincing proof. Gladly would we incorporate with the Church, provided nothing were imposed upon us that were contradictory to our consciences; but since that can't be obtained, it's hard to condemn us as schismatics; call us rather *unfortunate exiles*, because we refuse no scriptural term of communion, and are willing to conform, provided the things in question be left indifferent to be used or not, as persons find themselves persuaded in their own minds.”‡

The author speaks in the following manner of the doctrinal agreement between Dissenters and the Church:—“We profess no religion but that of the Church, whose doctrinal Articles our ministers sub-

\* This point is placed in a clear and convincing light in a powerful Discourse, entitled, “Dissent not Schism,” lately published by the Rev. Thomas Binney, minister of the (New) Weigh House Chapel.

† Pp. 20, 21.

‡ Pp. 18—25.

scribe *ex animo*,<sup>2</sup> as a test of their Protestantism, and, I am sure, stick closer to 'em than many of the Church."

The following extracts will further shew the general feeling of Dissenters on this point:—

"Nay more, multitudes of the Clergy dissent from the established Church in *principle*. It's true, they subscribe all her Articles, and are obliged to do it sincerely *ex animo*; but after all, 'tis well known, that in their judgments they are Nonconformists to several of them, especially in the *quin-quarticular* points. So a learned doctor of the Establishment tells us—

"I can't, (says he,) but observe, that some of those doctrines which were rejected as popish by our first reformers, are now commonly preached up and defended as articles of orthodox faith, as predestination upon fore-sight of works, the extravagant power of man's free-will, the final apostacy of the regenerate." Edwards's Preacher, Part II.

"Though these, and such like doctrines, were condemned by the first Protestants, as savouring very rankly of Rome, yet now (adds he) they pass for sound propositions, and every pulpit rings with them. 'Tis amazing to see so many subscribe the Articles, to qualify them for benefices, and run away with the name of the only Church of England, though at the same time they rail at many of them from pulpits and press."<sup>3</sup>

"He proceeds to acquaint us, in particular, that Mr. Bennet, Rector in Colchester, has affirmed, he would rather be charged with *popery* than *predestination*, though *predestination* be one of the Articles of the Church of England, to which he has subscribed. Art. 17.

"I say nothing of Hicks, Lesley, Bret, Higgins, and the rest of that *Cassandrian club*; since the very bulk of the clergy avowedly dissent from Calvin, whose doctrine is contained in the 39 Articles; it's true, the name of that glorious Reformer (since *Arminianism* obtained in the Church) is become odious to many of those that appropriate to themselves the title of the Church, who shew their degeneracy from their reformed mother, who in her infancy look'd upon *Calvin* as the brightest light of the Reformation, and her pattern in doctrinals.

"Thus Dr. Carlton, bishop of Chichester, (in a book dedicated to K. Charles I. 1626,) writes, *As for Calvin, his name and doctrine are made odious, but why I know not.*

"Dr. Hakewel, chaplain to Prince Charles, says, *That those who spoke against Calvin, did, thro' his side, strike at the throat and heart of our Religion.* Vide his book dedicated to K. James I., 1626.

\* These italics are the author's.

† P. 40.

‡ The reader will be reminded of the words of Lord Chatham concerning the Church of England—"We have a Calvinistic Creed, and an Arminian Clergy."

Dr. Hoyle, a reverend divine of the Church, in a book he writ by direction of Archbishop Usher, and dedicated to him, has these words—

‘JOHN CALVIN was a man, of whom I had almost said, as once it was of Moses, That there arose not a prophet since like him in Israel, nor since the Apostles’ days was before him.’

“In short, many doctrines of the church are scarcely to be found any where else but among the dissenters. I might add, besides the *Arminian points*, the differences in Convocation between the *Bishops* and *Presbyters*, (who have at last asserted their independency on their *diocesans*,) with the *Anti-Trinitarian Heresy*, which is grown to such a height, that the Church and Christianity itself is in real danger from it, whereby the present, as well as former governments, has been obliged to take notice of it. See *Can. 5.*, by which such are excommunicable who impugn any of the 39 Articles.” pp. 29-31.

This tract excited great clamour. An indictment was preferred, the same year, at the Lancaster assizes against the writer; the chief occasion of which was his giving the government certain information of the riots at Manchester, and a true bill was found against him; but a <sup>nolle</sup>~~nolle~~ *prosequi* was obtained, probably through the royal interference. Two curates, or, as he calls them, “a brace of high-church Levites,” were the chief instigators of this prosecution, and “of the violent conduct and threatening language of the mob, who bellowed out their furious invectives and curses against him and his book in every corner, threatening death to his person and demolition to his house,” &c.

One of these *reverend gentlemen*, whose *holy* wrath and *pious* zeal had been excited by this harmless pamphlet, published a diminutive tract in reply, under the courteous title—“Plain Dealing proved to be Plain Lying;” in which he attempts to convict the writer of deliberate and wilful falsehood. The ‘first lie’ which is alleged against him, is the statement contained in the following passage:—“‘The *English* Protestant Dissenters agree with the Established Church in all the essentials of our religion, and circumstances and acts of worship too, as far as they are agreeable to the word of God.’—*Ans.* This cannot be truly said by a *Presbyterian*, of either *Quakers*, *Anabaptists*, or *Independents*, who are all of them *English Protestant Dissenters.*”

The author of “A Vindication of Plain Dealing from the

base and malicious aspersions of two country Curates," &c. (probably Mr. Owen himself) after quoting this sentence from the preface to *Plain Dealing*, p. 5:—" *The design of the following treatise is to justify the modern Protestant Dissenters who are sound in the faith,*" adds—"Here it is plain Mr. Owen's meaning is, that those Protestant Dissenters who are sound in the faith, agree with the Church in all the essentials of our religion, &c. The Curates answer: "This can't be justly said by a Presbyterian, of either Quakers, Anabaptists, or Independents." Now, pray, what is this to the purpose? For if any of these be not sound in the faith, (which Mr. Owen does not determine, and the Curates would be hard set to prove,) they are not those Mr. Owen pleads for; if they be sound in the faith, the curates' answer is impertinent. p. 2.

He mentions the Assembly's Catechism and the 39 Articles as "Abstracts of Religion," p. 12. and in reference to the aspersion against Mr. O. of having "receded from the subscription he had made, and was obliged to by the Act of Toleration;" denies that he had "dissented from what he had once subscribed, as many Clergymen have done," p. 15.

The author of another tract, entitled "The Church of England Vindicated," &c. in reply to *Plain Dealing* and its *Vindication*," renews the same charge. After quoting the passages in which Mr. Owen speaks of his including Protestant Dissenters generally who are sound in the faith, and of their agreeing with the Established Church in all essentials, &c. he asks, "How this can be truly said by a *Presbyterian* of *English Protestant Dissenters* in general, [or] of any besides those of their own sect, is what I cannot apprehend?" p. 1.

To this tract, ascribed to a clergyman, and more decent in its tone, Mr. Owen replied in another, entitled "*Plain Dealing* and its *Vindication* defended," in which he states—"The first thing urged by the reverend answerer against *Plain Dealing*, is an objection formerly used and fully answered in the *Vindication*; and if this gentleman can't comprehend (as he says) how the Presbyterians can have so much charity as to think any besides themselves sound in the Essentials of religion, circumstances and acts of worship, too, as far

as they are agreeable to the word of God, I can't help that : I am sure if he cannot, or rather will not, apprehend it, it's no argument at all to the contrary," pp. 1, 2. The Dissenters (he states) professed to be sound in the faith, to agree with the Church in doctrine ; in short, they maintained that their religion was the very same with that of its adherents, and that they were equally true members of the body of Christ ; and that wherein they disagreed with the Church of England, they generally agreed with the reformed churches ; that " they carried no other design than the same common interest of reformed Christianity with her." " We (he says) are of the Church of England as it is a Christian Protestant church ; we believe her Fundamental Doctrines, use the same ordinances and worship, and only dissent from some human modes and ceremonies, in which the essence of a church does not consist," p. 15.

These extracts need no comment. They exhibit no indication of what a writer in a number of the Quarterly Review, lately published, calls " one of the most unmitigated evils of religious dissent—that zealous exclusiveness which still coops up the different sects of English Dissenters within their own narrow pale, and teaches them to confine all virtue, all truth, all Christian excellence, to their own sects."\* The sentiments here expressed, on the contrary, like those of Baxter and Howe, are catholic and comprehensive.

The reader needs not to be informed after the copious extracts which have already been produced, that the Presbyterians were zealous maintainers of what they regarded as the great essential truths of the Christian system, in distinction from minor and less important points. Herein they were true followers of Baxter. While repeating the admission already made, that they were not rigid, severe, and punctilious in their demand of doctrinal orthodoxy, *as measured by any human standard*, I must positively deny that any evidence can be produced to shew, that during the period in question they were *latitudinarian*. Their Calvinism was generally *moderate Calvinism* ; like Baxter and Calamy, they " held the articles of the Synod of Dort to contain sound and moderate doctrine ;"

\* No. 105, published February 7, p. 185.



in short, to borrow an expression from the will of Dr. Daniel Williams, they were at once "*orthodox* and *moderate*." They were ready earnestly to contend for what they regarded as the substance of Christianity,—those great fundamental verities which constitute the essence of the Christian system,—its peculiar distinguishing doctrines and principles; but to human terms employed in the explication of these doctrines, they were not disposed to demand full assent and consent. They were not such as Baxter calls "over-orthodox;" "they dared not (to adopt the words of Dr. Calamy) urge those who sat under their ministry to believe any thing necessary to salvation,\* but what can be proved and confirmed from scripture;"† but equally, if not still farther remote, were they from that miscalled charity, that false and spurious liberality, which regards with equal complacency "all differences of doctrine, provided only they be conscientious."‡ Declining the imposition upon conscience, of things not warranted by scripture, is a very different thing from holding out equal sanction and encouragement to "any religious opinions."§ Let it be granted, in one word, that they were moderate—did they set no bounds to that moderation? and was moderation peculiar to them? I admit there were some among the Congregational denomination who were stiff and rigid, not to say narrow and sectarian; but taking a general account of the whole body, these, I doubt not, formed an inconsiderable portion. Even in London, where a few individuals of limited views acted as if they were determined to embroil all their brethren of both denominations, and too well succeeded for a time; there were others, and those, probably, a large majority among the ministers belonging to this class, of larger and more expansive sentiments.

\* Thomas Cartwright, one of the earliest and most learned of the Presbyterian Puritans, did not acknowledge the distinction in importance between matters of doctrine and matters of discipline, but placed ceremonies, order, and government on the same level with "matters necessary to salvation and of faith;" and asserted that "the Discipline was one part of the Gospel."—See Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, edited by B. Haubury, Vol. I. pp. 208, 209, and notes.

† Calamy's Own Life, Vol. II. pp. 161, 169.

‡ Hist. p. 16.

§ Ibid. p. 51.

With Matthew Mead, and his efforts to promote renewed harmony, and a cordial redintegration of the original Agreement, the reader has already been made acquainted. I may now introduce to his notice a few others. Mr. Thomas Rowe, who from 1678 till his death in 1705, was pastor of the ancient Independent church which formerly met in Westminster Abbey, had the honour of educating Watts, Neal, Grove, and Say; besides Hughes the poet, and Hort, afterwards an Irish archbishop. It does not appear that he actively interfered, or took any part in the unhappy controversy about justification. Mr. Walter Wilson informs us, that he was deservedly in high repute for learning, candour, and liberality;\* that, "although himself a doctrinal Calvinist, he allowed to his pupils the most enlarged freedom of inquiry, and possessed a noble and generous mind, free from the shackles of a party, and utterly averse to all impositions in the concerns of religion."†

To Rowe, the muse of his grateful pupil, the Nonconformist poet,‡ inscribed an Ode, entitled "Free Philosophy," which clearly shews, that the "much-honoured director of his youthful studies" had not "a soul born to be confined," but

"A genius which no chain controls."

Dr. Calamy gives the following account of one of the first pastors of an Independent church which met at Pinner's

\* Hist of Diss. Churches, vol. iii. p. 191.

† Ibid. p. 171.

‡ Lyric Poems. Dr. Southey, in a Memoir of Dr. Watts prefixed to a late edition of this work, seems unwilling to concede to him the praise of being either a conscientious Nonconformist or a genuine poet, though he has done justice to his character as a man, a Christian, and a minister of religion. A gentleman who has not felt bound to retain the opinions and principles in which he was educated, or which in early life he had professed, (a circumstance which I do not insinuate as an imputation,) might have given a young aspirant for learning credit for being actuated by honest and sincere conviction in declining a generous offer to "provide for him at one of the English Universities," and determining to "take his lot with the Dissenters," at a time when Nonconformity was a reproach, if not a crime. Instead of this, he merely tells us, "having been bred up a Dissenter, he determined to remain one." p. ix. The poet-laureat might also have condescended to inform us, in direct terms, whether, in his judgment, the author of "Divine Songs for Children" is worthy to be enrolled among the British poets. Instead of this, he merely tells us, that "Watts may be placed about half way between Milton and Blackmore;" (p. xlvi.) though afterwards he would seem to insinuate that the Doctor did not rise above the level of the unpoetical knight. p. lxxv.

hall, who died December 19th, 1705:—"Mr. Richard Wavel was a very worthy man, of Congregational principles, but an extensive charity. It was his principle and constant practice to receive all whom Christ had received, without quarrels and controversies about doubtful disputables. His preaching was plain, and tended very much to exalt CHRIST, and the grace of God in him; and yet it was his dying advice to the church he had the care of, that they would choose one to succeed him of whom they should have some ground to hope that he would preach Christ crucified more than he had done."\*

The church to whom he tendered this dying counsel, did not, however, act upon it: for Mr. Walter Wilson informs us, that although Mr. Wavel and his predecessor, had been zealous Calvinists, those who succeeded them, "though divines of considerable eminence in their day, were of a very different stamp, and preached, in a manner, to empty pews. It is a most surprising circumstance, how a number of Christians, and many of them of long experience, should, from a warm evangelical pastor, fix upon one who, however learned and amiable, strove to keep his people in the dark as to his sentiments concerning the leading doctrines of the gospel."†

Mr. Hunt,‡ chosen pastor in 1707, was probably the person referred to in the following passage of a letter from Dr. Watts to his friend, the Rev. Samuel Say, who afterwards succeeded Dr. Calamy, as minister of a then flourishing Presbyterian church at Westminster, dated December 23d, 1708.

"I believe with you, that Mr. H.'s insisting so much on the duties of morality, and pressing them upon the motive of Christ's example, above and beyond all other motives, has been a reason why some persons have suspected him of Socinianizing, though he has several

\* Account of Ejected Ministers, p. 58. Continuation, pp. 87, 88.

† Hist. Diss. Churches, vol. 2, p. 254.

‡ Mr., afterwards Dr., Jeremiah Hunt, had been educated by Mr. Rowe, from whose academy he removed to the university of Edinburgh, and thence to that of Leyden in Holland, to complete his education, (so desirous were the dissenting ministers of this period to be thoroughly furnished with learning and scholarship,) and, for his attainments in the Hebrew language and literature, afterwards acquired the title of Rabbi Hunt.§ Though pastor of an Independent church, his orthodoxy was always suspected, as "his discourses were dry, critical, and destitute of that evangelical savour which distinguished the preaching of his predecessors."||

§ See Anecdotes of Bishop Watson, Vol. I p. 226.

|| Hist. Diss. Ch. vol. ii. p. 267.

times, in the pulpit and in converse, expressed his sentiments very plainly opposite to Socinus in the great points of controversy. I wish he had always done it, and talked with caution in all places on those subjects. He has raised many scruples among many persons; but I quash them wherever I find them. Now, my dear friend, I would lay aside all thought of Mr. H. in what follows. Let me inquire of you, whether you imagine the great and glorious doctrines of the gospel were all contrived, and the affairs themselves transacted, merely to subserve a little morality; whether our great Lord Jesus Christ was incarnate and died, rose and lives, and gave such a gospel, chiefly that we might be just and kind to our neighbours (for those two things include all moral duties); or rather, whether the honour of the wisdom, grace, and justice of God, the glory of his Son Jesus Christ, and the eternal enjoyment of his own love, which his chosen ones obtain thereby, be not far the greater ends of God's contriving the gospel, and sending it among men; and consequently, whether these ought not<sup>d</sup> to be insisted on in our preaching, at least as much as morality," &c. \*

Yet Dr. Watts, trained as he had been to charity and candour under the "gentle influence" of his amiable tutor, whose liberal sentiments he had deeply imbibed—though associated in the pastoral care of the Independent church which afterwards met in Bury-street, with Dr. Chauncey one of Dr. Williams's warmest opponents, was himself a zealous advocate for moderation. Early in 1707, he printed "an Essay against Uncharitableness, written to expose that most unchristian iniquity of censures, writings, church-anathemas, on the account of smaller disputables in Christianity." This piece was soon after incorporated in a larger work, entitled "Orthodoxy and Charity"—virtues which, as Dr. Johnson well remarked, were in his mind as well as in his book—"united." "By orthodoxy (says his recent biographer, whose valuable work has been already quoted) the author understands all those doctrines which were generally received and professed by Protestants at the Reformation; and he advocates the extension of a fraternal love towards all those who agree here, however widely in other respects they may differ." †

Of the book just referred to, which consists of "several reconciling Essays on the Law and Gospel, Faith and Works," Mr. Milner gives the following account:—

\* Milner's Life, Times, and Correspondence of Dr. Watts, pp. 228, 229.

† Ib. p. 213.

“ This is an attempt to unite those who hold the important doctrines of the gospel, but differ upon minor points ; to illustrate the evil consequences of altercation respecting minute and trivial peculiarities of faith or discipline ; and to gather within the bounds of Christian love all true believers in the Saviour, without limiting the flow of kindly feeling to a perfect conformity with our views. It is addressed to “ the moderate men among those who are called Calvinists, and those that are named New Methodists.” As for the “ high-fliers” of both parties, he discards them as incorrigible offenders. He anticipates, in his preface, a Socinian objection to his book, that no attempt is made to plead the cause of those who deny the atonement, and to procure for them a share of fraternal regard ; but a proper answer to this is given, that the doctrine is not one of the lesser things of the Christian system, but a fundamental principle, the denial of which is subversive of its whole genius and design. The substance of the gospel treated of in the first essay, is defined to embrace the great truths of the fall and depravity of our nature—the propitiatory work of Christ—divine influence—the necessity of repentance and faith—and the constant practice of a holy life. Those who agree here are united in the essential articles of religion, and assuredly ought not to be at variance in spirit. But questions as to the logical relations of different parts of divine truth—whether the gospel is an absolute promise, or a conditional covenant—whether the law ought to be proclaimed, or free grace alone exhibited—have kept their respective advocates at a distance, and separated, as with walls of triple brass, the several parties to which they have belonged.” \*

I have mentioned these circumstances, and introduced these quotations, to prove that there were some individuals, and those leading persons among the Independent ministers, who cheerfully reciprocated the feelings of their Presbyterian brethren, and responded to their call for union and communion, on the great principle warmly inculcated by Baxter, Howe, and Calamy : *in necessariis, unitas ; in non necessariis, libertas ; in omnibus, charitas.*

“ Dr. Hunt was the intimate friend of [the first] Lord Barington, who was a member of his church.” † His lordship, who, we are told by Mr. Prebendary Townsend, as quoted by the English Presbyterian Association, “ had a strong sense of the importance of free inquiry in matters of religion,” quitted the ministry of Mr. Thomas Bradbury, on which he had

\* Life, Times, &c. of Dr. Watts, pp. 674, 675.

† Wilson’s Diss. Churches, Vol. II. p. 268.

formerly been an attendant, on account of that gentleman's "bigoted zeal for imposing unscriptural terms upon the article of the Trinity." Yet, strange to say, he did not forsake this bigoted Independent to join a free-thinking Presbyterian society, but "attended divine worship, and for many years received the sacrament, at Pinners' Hall,"\* of which a member of the Independent Board was during that time the pastor.

To confirm the view above given of the doctrinal agreement of Dissenters among themselves and with the Established Church, in the early part of the last century, I will here introduce some passages from "A Sermon preached at Chester on occasion of Opening the new Meeting-house there, August 8, 1700, by the late Rev. Mr. Matthew Henry." It was printed for the first time in 1726, with a short preface by Dr. Watts, in which, after commending Mr. Henry's writings as adapted "to enlighten a dark world in the knowledge of Christ, to keep practical religion warm and lively among men, and to diffuse a spirit of sacred love thro' all the professors of Christianity;" he says, "those of his surviving friends who have the best right to publish his remains, desired me to assure the world in their name, that this sermon belongs to him whose name it bears," and mentions, "the savour of piety and love which breathes through it," as supplying internal evidence of its being his genuine production. The text is Joshua xxii. 22, 23, and the design of the discourse is to vindicate Dissenters from the censure and reproach of being actuated by narrow, factious, and sectarian views. Some extracts follow:—

"They who have themselves found how good it is to be near to God, and what an unspeakable pleasure and happiness there is in communion with him, cannot but be concerned to take all possible care, and make all probable provision, that their children after them may not be made to cease from following the Lord, or be looked on as having no part in him. With the human nature which we transmit to posterity, depraved and corrupted, 'tis very desirable to transmit pure and entire those sovereign remedies which religion has provided for the cure of that hereditary disease: not the narrow and private interests of a party, which in kindness to posterity we should study how to bury in oblivion, but the great and noble principles of Catholic

\* Hist. p. 47.

Christianity. These we should desire to entail the knowledge and faith of, upon our seed's seed henceforth and for ever, Is. lix. 21. They who rejoice in the light of the Gospel will desire that it may not die in their hands; and they who find themselves enriched with the true treasure, and know how to value it, can't but wish it may not be buried in their graves, Psa. xxii. 30; cii. 28., but well secured to their heirs, that in their tribe, and the families thereof, the name of Christ may endure for ever, and his throne as the days of old. pp. 2, 3.

"Those who build altars on which to offer in the eucharist a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of quick and dead, (as the Church of Rome does,) do in effect deny the sufficiency of that one great sacrifice, which Christ offered once for all upon the cross. Those that build altars for the maintaining and propagating any heresy,\* or the promoting and carrying on any design against religion in the power of it; that build altars to support a monopoly of the church, and engross to themselves its privileges, to the exclusion of others—spoil the acceptableness of the altars they build; and it will be construed to be done in transgression against the Lord. p. 13.

"Some unthinking people are apt to look upon those that go to church, and those that go to meetings, as of two different religions; and the distance between them is widened to a degree equal to that between Papists and Protestants. Thanks be to God, the matter is not so.

"We also are *Israelites* in common, and therefore in communion with those of the national establishment. Are they Christians? so are we. We worship the same God, in the same name, and heartily consent with them in all the articles of the ancient creed, holding *just the same form of sound words*, (2 Tim. iii. 16) *and contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints*. (Jude 3.) We are baptized, and do baptize, into the same great and sacred name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as three Persons, but one God: we read the same scriptures, and adhere to them as the standing rule of faith and practice, and make use of them as our oracle and touchstone. We build our hopes of salvation upon the covenant of grace, and the promises of it made to us and to our children, and submit to all gospel ordinances, particularly that of the ministry. Whatever the way in which we *worship the God of our fathers* is called and counted, *we believe all things which are written in the law, and the prophets, and the everlasting Gospel, &c.*

"We are far from engrossing religion and the church to ourselves and those of our own way, or thinking that we are the only elect

\* Little did this excellent man expect that this Meeting-house would ever be used for propagating the tenets broached by Socinus, whom he called "that arch-heretic." (Life, edit. Williams, p. 181.) ~~I have heard it stated, that~~ the gallery of this chapel was built at the expense and for the use of an Independent congregation, which joined in Mr. Henry's time.

people of God; from our hearts we abhor and renounce all such narrow principles as are contrary to catholic Christianity, and undermine and straiten its sure and large foundations. We do here solemnly profess, and shall take all occasions to repeat it, that we celebrate our religious assemblies *in communion with all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.* 1 Cor. i. 2."\*—Pp. 15, 16.

Some difference of opinion existed, about this time, between members of the Congregational denomination, and the generality of the Presbyterians, concerning the lawfulness and propriety of holding occasional communion with the Church of England, by joining with its members in public worship and in the participation of the Lord's supper, according to the form and with the rites prescribed in the Liturgy. In 1705, Mr. Tallents, a learned and excellent Presbyterian minister at Shrewsbury, published "A Short History of Schism, for the promoting of Christian Moderation and the Communion of Saints," in which, after entering into an examination of several texts of scripture, the records of ecclesiastical history, and some passages in the Fathers, particularly Cyprian, he proceeds to lay down this proposition—"To worship God sometimes, with those with whom we do not always, is oft a duty, and a special means to prevent, remove, or greatly to lessen the sin of schism, and to promote that which is so desirable—catholic communion."† He afterwards states, "It's plain, that generally they who are called Presbyterians, and some other Dissenters also, judge it lawful, and sometimes a duty for them to do so, and practise accordingly. Many have not opportunities to join with those of their own way; and there are many bishops and others, who are worthy persons, and preach excellently, and Dissenters oft go to hear them, and greatly honour them; and sometimes the main reason is, to shew they hold communion with them; that though there be many things amiss, against which they bear a real testimony by their Nonconformity, yet they go to

\* This can scarcely be said in any sense of the modern Unitarians. The Improved Version unwarrantably varies from Archbishop Newcome's translation of these words—*τοῖς ἐπικαλουμένοις τὸ ὄνομα*—which agrees with the Common Version (call on the name); rendering them—"are called by the name."

† Pp. 103, 104.



shew to the world, they separate not from them, and the better to maintain that spiritual love which ought to be among the members of the churches of Christ. The Dissenters who are of the Congregational way, say, they are not guilty of schism, and Dr. Owen and others have writ to shew they are free from it; yet they generally think they may not worship God with the Conformists at any time." He then quotes a passage from Dr. Owen, ('Of Evangelical Love,' &c.) to this purport—"that the Church of England, or the generality of the nation professing the Christian Religion, are a part, and as sound and healthful a part of the catholic visible church, as any in the world; that there is nothing in it that may directly and absolutely hinder men's eternal salvation; that to this catholic church they owe all love; and that it's their duty to hold constant communion with it, and that they do so by a Profession of the same Faith and obedience, yet judge they ought not to worship God with them," &c. "This," adds Mr. Tallents, "deserves to be well considered. But the Presbyterians go further, as they think in their souls they ought; though this grieves those their brethren the higher Nonconformists, and doth not please the high Conformists."\*

The reasons against the practice he proceeds to state and answer. He represents this as the *true catholic spirit*—"to communicate with persons sound in the faith, of all communions that impose or practise no sinful things."†

One of the chief advocates for occasional conformity was the catholic Nonconformist, John Howe, who published, in 1701, a tract in vindication of this practice, in reply to a publication by Defoe. Mr. Howe, in a sermon preached on the 5th of November, 1703, published the next year, after

\* Pp. 108, 109. Dr. Owen, it appears, held, that it was unlawful to unite in public worship with those who used the liturgy. A tract on this point, generally ascribed to him, was answered by Baxter, in another, entitled, "Catholick Communion defended," 4to. 1684. But this opinion was by no means universal among members of the Congregational denomination. A tract was published in 1683, entitled, "The Lawfulness of hearing the publick Ministers of the Church of England proved, by Mr. Philip Nye and Mr. John Robinson, two eminent Congregational Divines," &c. 4to.

† P. 118.

referring to the deliverance effected by Divine interposition, "from the power of darkness," of which that day was the anniversary commemoration, says—

"We ought to take much to heart the mercies of God herein. And although we are here met under somewhat a *distinct character*, to bear a part in the solemn thanksgivings of this day, we are not the less obliged to be very serious herein; and, however, have, for our part, great reason not to expect any thing hard or grievous from such, differing from us, as understand religion; between whom and us there is an agreement in all the *Substantials* thereof. We have the *same Articles of Doctrine*, the *same institutions of worship*, and the *same rules of life, conversation and practice* towards our Sovereign and fellow-subjects. And when there is so great an Agreement, that which is left to be the matter of disagreement, can only be very little circumstantial things; and which they from whom we differ professedly call indifferent, not tending, therefore, *in themselves*, to make either better men or better Christians. And whereas some of us do not think so, throughout; that disagreement is, we hope, the rather to be pardoned, both because it is *little*, so *little* that there are few men, of considering minds, that, upon strict inquiry and comparing of thoughts, will not be found to differ in much greater things, and very consistently with most entire mutual love, or, at least, no design of hurt to each other. And yet the difference is real, and not to be dissembled, nor thrown off at pleasure, it being in no man's power that would keep a conscience void of offence towards God and man, to form his judgment this way or that, as he will. And whereas there are Churches, abroad and at home, wherewith we agree, and from which we differ in these smaller things; we are not willing quite to disjoin ourselves from either sort, in which the Substance is visible of our common religion. For they are in their nature and kind one and the same; nor can we apprehend how a church or society, formed for the purposes of religion, can be constituted and distinguished for sole communion with that and no other, by such things as are confessed on all hands to be no parts of religion; nor to have any necessary connection with it. The more truly *catholic* the communion of Christians is, the more truly Christian. There is a mental communion which is more intimate than merely local, which yet we cannot have with them with whom we judge it unlawful to have actual local communion, if there be occasion. But one may have *both*, wheresoever the Essentials of Christianity do appear; not subverted by the addition of other things, that are inconsistent with any of those essentials."\*

\* Pp. 38-40.

Dr. Calamy, in his *Brief Account of the Protestant Dissenters*, (1717,) thus refers to the state of feeling among them on this point :—"Such friends are they to that Christian charity, upon which the writings of the New Testament lay so great a stress, that, while those of the Established Church are generally for confining their communion to such as are of their own way only, a number of the Dissenters have, from the first, (though they declared they foresaw the disservice it would do to their particular interest,) owned themselves free for *occasional conformity* with Christians of all forms, who agree in the Essentials of religion, in testimony of their esteeming them brethren, notwithstanding their differences in lesser matters." p. 34.

This was precisely the view of Christian communion entertained by the most distinguished men among the founders of the English Presbyterian churches. Mr. Howe, in his funeral sermon (1699) for Dr. Bates, another eminent and leading divine, who was often honoured to "stand before kings" on behalf of his Nonconformist brethren, says—"His judgment in ecclesiastical matters was to be known by his practice; and it was such, that he needed not care who knew it. He was for *entire Union* of all *visible Christians*, (or *saints*, or *believers*, which in Scripture are equivalent terms,) meaning by *Christianity*, what is essential thereto, whether *doctrinal* or *practical*; as, by *humanity*, we mean, what is essential to man, severing accidents as not being of the essence; and by *visibility*, the *probable appearance* thereof: and for free communion of all such, of whatsoever persuasion, in *extra-essential* matters, *if they pleased*. And this design he vigorously pursued as long as there was any hope; desisting when it appeared hopeless, and resolving to wait till God should give a spirit suitable hereto." pp. 96, 97.

After the numerous quotations which have been produced, the reader can be at no loss to determine what the Presbyterians considered essential to Christianity, in distinction from those lesser matters, about which they were willing to allow diversity of apprehension, as forming no barrier to Christian communion.

Both the English Presbyterian Association and Mr. Hunter have quoted some passages from the dedication of a printed funeral sermon by Mr. Shower, (whom the latter calls "one of the most eminent Presbyterian ministers" of the period in question,) for Mr. Nathaniel Oldfield, a pious and devoted young minister, who died December 31, 1696, and may be taken as a fair specimen of the class of Presbyterian divines, who were immediate successors of the ejected clergy. These passages clearly recognise the important distinction between *Fundamentals* and *little matters* of dispute.\*

To shew that Mr. Hunter has misrepresented or misinterpreted the design of these passages, it will not be necessary to pass beyond the bounds of the brief publication in which they are contained. That the writer had no intention of giving countenance to an unlimited toleration *within the pale of the Christian church*, of all kinds of opinions, will sufficiently appear from the sermon itself. The text is Heb. xiii. 7. "Remember them who have [had] the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow," &c. The former words are thus explained—"Remember those who have been your spiritual guides—who have been your instructors in the faith—preachers of the Everlasting Gospel;

\* "Next to his piety, or as a part of it, his Peaceableness and Charity, in opposition to bitterness and dividing zeal, and a narrow spirit, was very commendable and exemplary. He could unite with all Christians in things necessary, and was not for making more Fundamentals and Necessaries than Christ hath made, or for other terms of Church communion, than the terms of our common Christianity; and therefore was ready to receive all whom he believed Christ would receive."

"He was of *one Church* with all those whom he hoped to meet in heaven. Endeavouring to hold the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, because he acknowledged there 'is but one body, one Spirit, one Lord Jesus Christ, one hope, one faith, one baptism, (and consequently but one holy table,) one God and Father of all, from whom and by whom and for whom are all things.'

"This charitable spirit, (let who will call such Moderation lukewarmness,) with serious diligence to please God, and do what service we can in our several places, will be accepted with God, and yield us comfort living and dying; and will, I doubt not, be better thought of hereafter, when the little names of distinction and matters of dispute, that now divide Christians and Protestants, shall be forgotten"—Hist. pp. 41, 42. Hist. Def. pp. 42, 43.

whose office it was to feed the flock of Christ by sound doctrine; to unfold the mind of God to others; to teach them what they must know, believe and do, avoid and hope for; to acquaint their hearers with their several maladies and remedies, dangers and duties, to hold forth the excellency of Christ, so as to make him be received and obeyed, admired and loved.”\* The importance which, in the writer’s view, is attached to this part of their office, will appear from the following extracts:—

“How much the welfare of the church depends upon the ministers and teachers of the word, and how little the beauty and glory of religion can ever be kept up in the world, if ministers do not *labour in the word and doctrine*, will very easily appear to such as consider how religion has declined and been lost by the ignorance, and unfaithfulness, and negligence of those that ought to have preached the Gospel of Christ; and how the denial or contempt of the ministry hath always been accompanied with the growth of atheism, infidelity, and profaneness. How solemnly does the apostle charge the elders of the church of *Ephesus*, Acts xx. 28, 30. ‘Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood, and to warn every man, lest they be perverted by false teachers,’ &c.†

“Another thing concerning these deceased ministers the Apostle mentions, is, their *exemplary Faith*. They would not have been proposed as patterns with respect to *faith*, if they had not been famous and exemplary, as to the clearness of their minds, and the soundness of their doctrine. *Follow their faith*. Doubtless he means it, of such who, as to knowledge, and firmness of persuasion concerning the truths of the Gospel, and fruitfulness in suitable effects, did in spirit and practice shew themselves *believers*. They would not, otherwise, have been named as fit examples for the people to follow, as to their *faith*. You find ministers are exhorted to *take heed to their doctrine*, 1 Tim. iv. 16, and to continue therein, that they may *save themselves and them that hear them*, and to *speak the things that become sound doctrine*, 1 Tim. vi. 3. They are to keep the doctrine of the Gospel pure and uncorrupt, and to feed the people with the sincere milk of the word. For if the Doctrine, which should promote faith and holiness, should be depraved by the ministers of the word, how is it possible that true Christianity should spread and flourish, or be preserved and continued? What need have we to beg that God would give and continue such *pastors after his own heart*, as may feed his people with *good knowledge and sound understanding*. They must hold fast the faithful word

\* Pp. 2, 3, 13, 17.

† Pp. 15 16

that they have been taught, that they may be able, by *sound doctrine*, to exhort and convince the gainsayers, Tit. i. 6—9, chap. ii. 1.; such speech that cannot be condemned, that he who is of the contrary part may be ashamed. And how comfortably and usefully may they preach to others, who are firmly persuaded of the truth of what they say, who believe and live the truth they deliver !”\*

These extracts clearly shew the persuasion entertained by the writer concerning the indispensable necessity of soundness in “the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ”—a clear perception and firm conviction of the truths which eminently constitute the Gospel, as a qualification for the useful and efficient discharge of the ministerial office. So far from exhibiting any thing like indifference to the preservation of the faith “pure and uncorrupt,” he, in effect, declares, that the doctrine of the Gospel being *depraved* by those who call themselves, “ministers of the word,” renders it impossible that TRUE CHRISTIANITY should spread and flourish, or be preserved and continued. The moderation of Mr. Shower and his Presbyterian brethren did not degenerate into latitudinarianism, or confound reasonable liberty with unbounded license. The admitted fact of their liberality of sentiment only serves to confirm the paramount importance which they attached to those great essential truths, which they did not regard as fit subjects or occasions for its exercise.

But in proof of the allegation, that they prescribed limits to their liberality, I may appeal not only to the words of the writer whom Mr. Hunter quotes, contained in this brief discourse, but to the remarks made by Mr. Hunter himself. Referring to the passages quoted by him, he says, “they do not indeed shew us the precise limitations which they would set up to bound the Christian church, but they shew quite intelligibly that they would enlarge it as wide as possible, and that the heresy must be very decided indeed, which placed a man beyond their comprehensive pale.”† I freely concede, that only heresy very decided indeed would have placed a man beyond their comprehensive pale of church communion—only such heresy as would place the man who held and avowed it beyond the pale of “Catholic Christianity,”—a denial of some

\* P.p. 18—20.

† Hist. Def. P. 43.

one or more of the essential Articles of the Christian faith; but such, undoubtedly, was the Anti-Trinitarian heresy in their estimation. To adopt the words of Howe, in his funeral sermon for Dr. Bates, “the great substantials of Christianity were the measure of their communion.”

“Passages such as these,” says Mr. Hunter, “shew that there was something in the minds of the Presbyterian ministers of that age, which prevailed above anything like zeal for orthodox opinions.” Mr. Shower expressly states, that Mr. Oldfield had a “zeal for truth,” but, while he also describes him as eminent for charity, he does not intimate that this prevailed above his earnest regard for doctrinal purity. After stating that “he did not confine the church of Christ to a *party*, or endeavour to make proselytes to *any*—for he was of none, but that, with all Christians, for *Christ* against the *Devil*—that he was an enemy to censorious heats and bitterness, and all such narrow principles as destroy love, and of a truly healing and catholic spirit”—the author proceeds to describe his character as a minister of Christ, and applies to him the words of the apostle Paul, Titus i. 9 : “holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” He afterwards enumerates the following particulars :—

“With clearness he would open and apply the Doctrinal Articles of Religion, and by catechizing instruct the ignorant. He would often use the expression of the Apostle, *I am not sent to baptize, comparatively, but to preach the Gospel*, which is the power of God, to the salvation of the soul. You remember concerning his preaching, how practically, both for matter and manner, he insisted on the Great Things of Religion. He did not amuse his hearers (whom he considered as near the grave and the eternal world) with *controversies* which they need not understand, and concerning which wise and good men may have different sentiments, and yet be wise and good, be accepted of God, and bear with one another. He carefully avoided *extremes*, in opening and applying the truths of the Gospel. He was wont to exhort men to work out their own salvation with all diligence, and to strive to the utmost to enter into heaven ; and yet, after all, to trust and rely *only* on the mediation and righteousness of Christ. He preached and proved the necessity of an *imputed righteousness*, and yet urged the necessity of an *inherent* one ; that the priestly office of Christ, and his sacrifice

for sin might be honoured, and yet the Holy Ghost, in his sanctifying influence, might be honoured too. He did not make morality the whole duty of man; nor yet deceive the people, by saying that Christ repented for them and believed for them.\* He magnified the *special* grace of God in the conversion of a sinner, and yet preached repentance towards God as necessary to forgiveness, with faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, without curiously considering which is *first*, when *both* are needful, and never parted. He laid the whole stress of our salvation on Jesus Christ. He ascribed the beginning, progress, and finishing of all spiritual good, entirely to the free grace of God; and yet the impenitence, unbelief, and damnation of sinners, he justly charged on their own wilfulness, in hearkening to the devil. And if this be *legal preaching*, what is it to preach the gospel of Christ?†

It thus appears that he was opposed to Antinomian tenets, and that his views of the Gospel were practical; but where do we find any evidence of what Mr. Hunter imputes to the Presbyterian body at that time—"a latitudinarian spirit, which is inconsistent with the possession of zeal for any particular modification of Christian belief?" We see, indeed, "a comprehensive spirit, a loving good men of all denominations;" but not "the setting works before faith." They laid as the foundation of virtue and morality, repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and regarded faith as a principle which, if genuine, will certainly produce good works. They were zealous for "the truth which is according to godliness," and were ready "to contend earnestly," though in the spirit of meekness, "for the faith once delivered to the saints;" and (to use Mr. Shower's own expression) were not so unreasonable as to "think that a heretic may preach the truth as well as the orthodox."‡ Mr. Shower mentions a circumstance, which shews the high estimation in which the character and writings of Baxter were held among the young Presbyterian ministers of that time.

"That great and good man, Mr. Baxter, who very much esteemed and loved him, not long before he left this world, sent him this kind message—that he should take heed lest he spent too fast. That Mr.

\* This was one of the offensive tenets ascribed to the Antinomians of Dr. Crisp's time. "When I read in Saltmarsh (says Baxter) that Christ repented and believed for us, it let in more light against libertinism than I had before."—Defence of the Nonconformist's Plea for Peace, p. 110. † P. 60 --64. ‡ P. 69.



Baxter loved him, I reckon to his honour. He was one of many, who thanked God for the assistance he received as a Christian, and as a minister, from the useful books, preaching, and conversation of that excellent man. I freely concur with him therein, having reason to thank God upon the like account.”\*

In summing up his character, Mr. Shower describes him as “one of a clear head and warm heart, who understood, believed, and obeyed the Gospel.”†

That Mr. Shower held the Socinians of his time to be deniers of the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, is apparent from a passage in his Exhortation to Ministers and People at the Ordination of Mr. Thomas Bradbury, July 10, 1707, in which, after adverting to the circumstance that ministers of different denominations were concurring in the service, he adds—

“How needful is it, that we do our utmost to unite against the enemies of our common Christian faith, and encourage and strengthen one another in our endeavours for the common interest of real Christianity? Do we not all hold the Head? and shall we not own and love one another? agreeing in so many more and greater things than they are about which we differ? Do we not all of us profess to dissent in some things from those of the National Establishment, upon the like principles of conscience? and yet to own and honour them as Protestants and brethren? Let us always distinguish between those things about which good and wise men may differ, and yet be good men, who love God and love one another; and those things that are essential to Christianity. Have not all *English Protestants* common enemies, that would be glad to involve us in a general ruin; and shall we contribute to it by discords among ourselves, for want of a spirit of charity, unity, and mutual forbearance?—*Common enemies*, I say, not the *Romanists* only, but such as strike at all revealed religion, overthrow the authority of the holy scriptures, and deny the Divinity of our Blessed Lord; who would run down and ridicule the sacred ministry, and all the positive institutions of the Christian religion?”‡

Here, the reader will observe, he associates those who deny the Divinity of Jesus Christ with deists, free-thinkers, and infidels, and this in immediate connexion with passages containing a pathetic appeal on the duty of maintaining and promoting harmony and concord among different denominations of Dissenters, and different classes of English Protestants.

\* P. 69.

† P. 82.

‡ Pp. 47, 48.

Sufficient evidence has now, I trust, been produced, to satisfy every candid reader, that the Presbyterian fathers and their successors held certain doctrines to be essential to Christianity; that in their judgment there were *doctrinal* limits to the principle of free inquiry, at least among those who were to be admitted or retained as members of the Christian church; and that while they objected to implicit assent to "creeds, liturgies, and articles, being enforced by *violent* persuasives or dissuasives,"\* they refused, if not to "tolerate the opinions of all,"† at least to open the door of church communion to the holders of all opinions, to acknowledge as Christians those who rejected any of the fundamental articles of Christianity, or to admit the principle of equally receiving and regarding with equal favour those, whose decisions concerning any religious doctrine, even the most vital and the most important, were opposite and contradictory.‡ Whether right or wrong, it is clear, that such conduct was entirely at variance with their judgment and practice. They allowed diversity of opinion upon minor points, not affecting the substance of Christianity, and inculcated mutual charity, moderation, and forbearance, in reference to matters on which a variety of judgment was not destructive of that Unity of the Faith for which they contended.

Some individuals among them might also have allowed unlimited freedom of inquiry to persons *without the pale of the church*, though it seems doubtful whether in the early part of the last century *any* members of this denomination would have consented to the civil magistrate's tolerating the free propagation, even by means of sober argument and learned discussion, of opinions generally deemed heretical and blasphemous.§ The Irish Presbyterians, it appears, approved of an appeal to the civil power, for the suppression even of Arian tenets, when

\* Hist. pp. 53, 56.

† Ibid. p. 29.

‡ Ibid. p. 58.

§ "We are still, (says Dr. Calamy,) of the same mind with the ministers concerned in the Conference at the Savoy; who, in their *Petition for Peace*, thus expressed themselves—'Grant us but the freedom which Christ and his apostles left unto the churches; use necessary things as necessary, and unnecessary things as unnecessary, and charitably bear with the infirmities of the weak, and tolerate the tolerable while they live peaceably, and then you will know when you have done.'"—Defence of Moderate Nonconformity, 1703. Part I. p. 192.

broached by one of their ministers; and although the views of their English brethren might be more tolerant, yet if the exercise of that liberty of thought which they allowed, degenerated into licentiousness, if freedom of inquiry and the right of private judgment passed beyond the limits which separate fundamental truth from non-essential, they would have refused to admit into, or, in the exercise of discipline, have cast out of *the church*, such parties as fit only to be numbered with unbelievers and apostates.

A few words will now suffice, in reference to what is called "the great Presbyterian principle—the right of private judgment."\* That every individual should be left at liberty to inquire, judge, and determine for himself in religious matters, uncontrolled by any foreign authoritative interference, was indeed a principle adopted by the Presbyterians, but it was not their *great* or *distinguishing* principle. Instead of being *peculiar* to them, it was common to the whole body of Nonconformists; and these writers themselves describe it as "the great *Protestant* principle."† But then we are told they were the only body who practically adopted it, "upheld it as an active principle," carried it to its full extent, and "followed it out in all its consequences."‡ Whence then has arisen the Unitarianism among the General Baptists, or how has Arianism found its way into some of the Congregational churches, of which Yorkshire now supplies two instances, the chapel in

\* Hist. p. 52.

† The English Presbyterian Association expressly call "the right of private judgment the great principle of Protestant Dissent," pp. 45, 46; and Mr. Hunter, (p. 47.) in proof of this being the principle of the Presbyterian founders, quotes passages from two "books, esteemed of authority in such a question." One of these is, "Towgood's Dissent from the Church of England fully justified," in which he speaks of it as 'the only principle on which the Dissenters rest their cause.' The other is a popular manual, by the late Rev. Samuel Palmer, of Hackney, an eminent Independent minister, than whom no one better understood, or more highly valued, the grand principles which he here expounds as those of the entire body:—

"Q. What are the grand principles on which the Protestant Dissenters ground their separation from the Church by law established?

"A. The right of private judgment and liberty of conscience, in opposition to all human authority in matters of religion; the supremacy of Christ as the only Head of his Church; and the sufficiency of the holy scriptures as the rule of faith and practice."—The Protestant Dissenters' Catechism, &c. 13th edit. 1807, p. 24.

‡ Hist. p. 52. Hist. Dec. pp. 41, 46.

Call Lane, Leeds, and the Upper Chapel, Sheffield? But this principle was well understood, held inviolably sacred, and firmly maintained by the other denominations of Dissenters, who did not "tie the minds and consciences of men in the strict bonds of creeds, confessions, and articles," by "coercive subscription." It was regarded as forming the very basis of enlightened and consistent Nonconformity; and is, in fact, the great principle embodied in the famous maxim of Chillingworth, "the Bible, the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants,"—the sole rule of their faith, and directory of their practice,—on which the Reformation was founded, and on which alone it can be defended and sustained.

Mr. Hunter acknowledges that the modern Unitarians have "renounced *all* which some men now incline to call the peculiar and distinguishing principles of the Gospel,"\* and extends this remark to the Arians of a much earlier period. But the question is not, what *some* men *now* incline to call the peculiar and distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, but what the Presbyterians of the period in question considered such, and whether, agreeing in judgment with the orthodox of modern times, they did not regard as fundamentally erroneous the tenets held by their Socinian contemporaries, who had not proceeded to nearly the same length in the career of doctrinal deviation as the present race of Unitarians? That they did regard the Socinian doctrine in this light, I have attempted to prove.

"The varieties of the heterodoxy" are pronounced "little material in this inquiry;" but when "first the departure took place from the orthodoxy of the founders" it was very remote from what subsequently, though not till after an interval of many years, it became in several congregations, and that (to use Mr. Hunter's words) "not by any sudden transition, but by a gradual sliding."† I cannot, however, admit that "the various modifications of the heresy are of small importance," for to me it appears a material circumstance, that several great doctrines which are totally rejected by modern Unitarians, were held by the earliest heterodox Presbyterian ministers.

\* Hist. Def. p. 53.      † Ib. p. 50.

Many strong expressions might be quoted from the sermons of Mr. Peirce, to shew that he made a very near approach to orthodoxy on some points closely connected with the doctrine of the proper essential deity of Christ, which he was one of the first who abandoned.\*

The English Presbyterian Association distinguish between Arianism, and what they call "proper Unitarianism;" and even among Arians, there are varieties and shades of opinion, some of which, when compared with modern Unitarianism, approximate to orthodoxy.

Mr. Martin Tomkins, minister of a Presbyterian congregation at Stoke Newington, Middlesex, who was dismissed for Arianism in 1718, was author of a tract in defence of the doctrine of atonement, published in 1732, under this title—"Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and Man, an Advocate for us with the Father, and a Propitiation for the Sins of the World," which Dr. Doddridge calls "an excellent treatise."† The learned Dr. John Taylor, of Norwich, afterwards theological professor at the Warrington academy, was the first Presbyterian minister who ventured to call in question this great article of the Christian faith.‡ In 1751 he published 'The Scripture Doctrine of Atonement,' in which Socinian tenets on that essential point are propounded, though with great apparent modesty and deference.

\* The following may serve as a specimen—"Well may we call the universe to observe and wonder at this. Hear, oh heavens; and give ear, oh earth! The Creator, he by whom God made the worlds, has become an infant; and he that made all things has been made of a woman. He that gives life to all, has condescended to receive life by the means of such to whom he gave it. His dwelling thus with men on earth is the more marvellous, if we consider the design of it. What a perfect expiation and atonement has he made for our sins? This was the end of his appearance. We know that he was manifested, to take away our sins. Astonishing grace!" &c.—Fifteen Sermons, 1728, pp. 300, 301.

† Family Expositor, note on John i. 29. A second edition of this tract was published in 1761, with "An Essay by another gentleman, to prove the credibility of the gospel, from the doctrine of the efficacy of Christ's death for the redemption of the world."

‡ Dr. Taylor also made the first attack on the doctrine of natural depravity, in his "Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin," published in 1740, which gave occasion to one of the masterly argumentative works of that "prodigy of metaphysical acumen," President Edwards.

Mr. Hunter himself speaks of "material points,"\* and mentions "the *great* question" at issue between Trinitarians and Unitarians;† and truly a question which involves the proper object of all religious veneration and homage, the moral condition of the human race, the method of acceptance with God, and eternal salvation, is well entitled to that epithet. He allows that Christianity has its "great doctrines," and has enumerated several, which in his estimation are such.‡ Among these, the Presbyterians, during the reign of Queen Anne, certainly included the proper essential deity of the Son of God, the sacrificial design of his death, the distinct personality, true divinity, and sanctifying agency of the Holy Spirit. The system now designated "Unitarian Christianity," is entirely subversive of that "one faith," all the intelligent and sincere professors of which they were willing to acknowledge as brethren, whom Christ had already received, and one heaven would hereafter contain. Mr. Henry, in his *Brief Inquiry into the true Nature of Schism*, (1690,) gives this definition of the true scripture notion of it—"an uncharitable distance, division, or alienation of affections, among who are called Christians, and agree in the fundamentals of religion, occasioned by their different apprehensions about little things;" and another Presbyterian minister, (Rev. John Billingsley, of London,) in a small tract entitled 'A Brief Discourse of Schism,' (1714,) in which he condemns, on the one hand, "causeless disputes about trifles and undue scrupulosity," and on the other, "the *imposing* spirit," which he calls the usurping of God's throne and lording it over conscience, adopts this definition of heresy—"any Doctrine that overthrows the faith, and destroys the foundation of religion, and the hope of salvation by JESUS CHRIST; especially if it be openly espoused, industriously propagated, and obstinately persisted in." pp. 13, 16.

\* Hist. Def. p. 49.

† Ib. p. 57.

‡ Ib. p. 35. The English Presbyterian Association also speak of "essential points," Hist. p. 10, and "the greater points of religion," p. 29.

MEANS ADOPTED BY PRESBYTERIANS TO PERPETUATE ORTHODOXY IN THEIR CHURCHES.—PROFESSION OF FAITH REQUIRED BEFORE ADMISSION TO THE SACRAMENTS.—GENERAL USE OF THE ASSEMBLY'S SHORTER CATECHISM.—PROBABLE REASON FOR NON-INSERTION OF RESTRICTIVE CLAUSES IN TRUST DEEDS, ALTHOUGH THEIR CHAPELS WERE ERECTED EXCLUSIVELY FOR TRINITARIAN WORSHIP.—SOLEMN CONFESSION OF FAITH REQUIRED PREVIOUSLY TO ORDINATION.—MODE OF PERFORMING THAT RITE.—ITS DISUSE AMONG MODERN UNITARIANS.

THESE writers deny that the early Presbyterians, although themselves moderately orthodox, took any precautionary measures to secure the orthodoxy of their successors, erected any barriers against the incursion of error, or adopted any means to hinder the encroachment of heresy. Even persons orthodox from deliberate conviction, might be comparatively indifferent about the perpetuation of orthodoxy among those that should hereafter occupy the chapels which they erected, or share in the benefit of the endowments or other trust-funds which they conveyed and settled for the use of future generations. The following assertions embody the substance of what has been said on this point. 1. They did not bind their successors to an entire agreement with their own opinions, "by any interpretative creeds, or catechisms, or articles."—This has been already admitted, so far as relates to the *imposition* of such documents as authoritative tests of orthodoxy, thereby in effect supplanting the scriptures, as the only rule of faith.—2. They did not introduce any tests into the trust-deeds of their chapels, but "left them at large, in respect to the doctrinal opinions of those who were to be beneficiaries under them," instead of inserting clauses "to secure the perpetual prevalence of their own sentiments in their congregations."†—3. They placed no barriers in the way of the exercise of that freedom of mind, the love of which was the great characteristic of the body—"surrounded their communion with no fences—required no confessions or professions of belief, in order to

\* Hist. Def. p. 48.

† Ib. pp. 49, 39.

admission to the Lord's table"\*—or, to use the words of the English Presbyterian Association, "it appeared to them to be plainly expedient, and consistent with scripture doctrine and their religious principles, to adopt open communion."†

This last assertion might safely be met by a direct denial, and the writer challenged to prove it, which he has not even attempted to do; but the real facts are so incontestable, that I cannot refrain from producing a portion of the evidence in support of them.

The general statement now to be substantiated is, that the Presbyterians, from the Revolution to the death of queen Anne, took precautionary measures to secure the continued orthodoxy of their churches and ministers, and to restrain, by the exercise of discipline and government, the introduction of erroneous and heretical doctrine. Whether the measures they adopted were suitable in kind or strong enough in degree, and why they did not, in fact, prove efficient and available for this purpose, are questions foreign from the scope of this inquiry. The following are the principal facts to be proved in support of the above statement:—

1. They required a confession of faith from parents, previously to admitting their children to baptism, and from adults previously to their being received into the number of communicants at the Lord's Supper, and asserted the right of their churches to excommunicate heretical members.

2. They used the Assembly's Shorter Catechism in the religious instruction of their children.

3. Their ministers invariably required a formal profession of faith from candidates for the ministerial office, previously to their being admitted into it by the solemn rite of ordination; and their congregations not only claimed, but in several cases exercised, the right of dismissing their ministers for embracing erroneous opinions on what were deemed fundamental points of doctrine.

So far from "allowing unrestrained access to the Lord's Supper to any persons whatsoever," there was invariably among them an "exercise of discretion by the ministers and

\* Hist. Def. pp. 38, 18, 16.

† Hist. p. 33.



other officers, explicitly or implicitly, in the name and on the behalf of the Church, that is, the body of communicants, in admitting to and excluding from that sacrament." They required from candidates, previously to their admission, a declaration or profession of faith. They might indeed restrict this requirement to a serious and intelligent avowal of 'Faith in Jesus Christ;'\* which Dr. Calamy calls, "that great and essential point."† In explanation of the extent of meaning which they attached to the phrase "believing in Christ," or the truths which they considered as included in it, I will again have recourse to Baxter, and make a few brief extracts from his "Key for Catholics," 2nd edit. 12mo, 1674:—"The Protestants say that a man cannot be justified or saved without an actual faith in Christ, (or being the infant of a believer, dedicated to Christ,) and that this faith must extend to all things that are essential to Christianity," p. 358. After distinguishing between *material* points, (which he describes as "precious truths of God, which men ought to believe, but in which they may err, and yet be true Christians,") and points *essential* to Christianity, he asks, "Must you needs know what these *Essentials* are? In a word—*those which the Apostles and the ancient Church pre-required the knowledge and profession of, unto baptism.*" pp. 164, 165.

"The Reformed Catholics hold that none should be taken into the church by baptism, unless themselves or their parents, if they be infants, do make Profession of the Christian faith, and of an holy life, for the time to come, and seem to understand what they say and do, and be serious in it." p. 356.

"The orthodox hold, that none are to be admitted to the eucharist, and communion of the church therein, but those that believe actually (or profess so to do) the articles of the faith, and understand the nature of the sacrament, and live according to the law of Christ."—p. 357.

\* The reader will recollect, that in the Heads of Agreement, among the "Essential Requisites to Church Communion," one is, that the person seeking admission "be knowing and sound in the Fundamental Doctrines of the Christian religion." The Presbyterians never renounced this principle, and for many years afterwards adhered to it in practice.

† "Defence of Moderate Nonconformity," part ii. p. 267.

Baxter held that baptism included "a profession of faith in God—the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; a sincere giving up of ourselves in covenant to him, as our God and Father, our Redeemer and Saviour, our Sanctifier and Comforter." He states, that the form—"I believe in God—the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost"—"expresseth all the Essentials of our Religion intelligibly to him that hath learned truly to understand the meaning of these words; but to an ignorant man, a large plain catechism is short enough to express the same things." He then proceeds as follows:—

"But as to the use of *public Professions of faith*, to satisfy the church, for the admittance of members, or to satisfy other churches to hold communion with any particular church, a form of words which is neither obscure by too much conciseness, nor tedious or tautological by a needless multiplication of words, I take to be the fittest. To which ends, and because the ancient churches had once a happy union on those terms, I think that this is all that should be required of any church or member (ordinarily) to be professed:—'In general, I do believe all that is contained in the sacred canonical scriptures, and particularly I believe all explicitly contained in the ancient Creed, and I desire all that is contained in the Lord's Prayer, and I resolve upon obedience to the Ten Commandments, and whatever else I can learn of the will of God.' And for all other points, it is enough to preserve both truth and peace, that men promise not to preach against them, or contradict them, though they subscribe them not."\*

The Presbyterians, for many years after the death of Baxter, took the same view of the baptismal covenant, as a solemn profession of being Christians—a formal admission into the kingdom of Christ—a solemn dedication to the sacred Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.† They considered a profession

\* Narrative of his Own Life, Part II. p. 198. This passage immediately precedes the quotation introduced by the E. P. Association, [Hist. p. 39,] from a tract published in 1719, where Baxter's words are not copied with literal accuracy. In answering the objection, that "a Socinian, or a Papist, will subscribe all this," he says, "if you are afraid of communion with Papists and Socinians, it must not be avoided by making a new rule or test of faith, &c., but by calling them to account whenever in preaching or writing they contradict or abuse the truth to which they have subscribed." With these words the quotation ends. Baxter immediately subjoins:—"This is the work of *Government*; and we must not think to make *laws* serve instead of *Judgment* and *Execution*; nor must we make *new laws* as oft as Heretics will misinterpret and subscribe the *old*," &c.

† "The part of a godly parent—is professing his Faith, dedicating his child to God, and promising a religious education."—Calamy's Abr. Life of Baxter, p. 215.

of the Christian faith on the part of parents the condition of their children's right to baptism.

From a popular tract, first printed in 1716, it appears, that although Dissenters who practised infant baptism, generally administered that ordinance after a confession of faith, and promise for the religious education of the child, no particular form of words was prescribed.\*

What qualifications they required from adult persons offering themselves for stated communion with their churches in the Lord's Supper, may be readily ascertained.†

Mr. Tong says, in 1691, "We desire no more than a credible Profession of Faith and Holiness, in order to admission to the most solemn ordinances; we require no oaths, subscriptions, declarations of assent and consent to canons, &c.‡"

Dr. Watts, in the account he has given of the opinions and practices of the Presbyterians and Independents, states, that while the former usually required no more from those whom they admitted into their churches, than sufficient evidence of their "good knowledge and sober conversation," the latter required also an account of their conversion, or of their subsequent religious experience, to prove the sincerity of their faith.§ The Presbyterians, however, considered much more necessary to salvation than mere speculative knowledge of doctrinal truth, utterly inefficacious to sanctify the heart and regulate the life.

Mr. Henry published in 1703 a short catechism for the instruction of those that are to be admitted to the Lord's Supper, which shews that he considered the sacramental engagement as a solemn deliberate act, to be accompanied by a lively faith in the Redeemer. The following may exhibit the general opinion concerning the nature and design of that sacrament:—

"Children baptized in their infancy are by that solemnity dedicated and devoted to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." Mat. Henry, Sermon on Catechizing, 1713, p. 28.

\* Lay Nonconformity justified, 6th edit. 1717, p. 28.

† "Nothing is to me more evident, than that all who *soberly profess an adherence to the baptismal covenant*, have a right to all the ordinances of Christ, in any church, in any part of the earth where their lot is cast. And this I know (and could prove, if need were) to have been the sense of several who have gone under the name of *Independents*."—Calamy's Def. of Mod. Nonconf. 1704, Part II. p. 64.

‡ Vindication of Mr. Henry's Brief Inquiry on Schism, p. 54.

§ Life, &c. by Milner, pp. 196, 197.

"Q. 11. Why would you be admitted to this solemn ordinance?

"A. Because I desire to take the Covenant of my Baptism upon myself, and to make it mine own act and deed to join myself unto the Lord.

"Q. 13. What do you think of Christ, who is there set before you?

"A. I think he is a gracious and all-sufficient Saviour, and I accept of him as my Lord and my God.

"Q. 30. Who shall be welcome to this ordinance?

"A. They that by Faith cordially consent to the covenant of grace, and do honour to their Redeemer, by shewing forth his death."\*

The English Presbyterian Association, speaking of the differences among the London ministers toward the close of the seventeenth century, say—"These disputes widened the distinctions between the two parties, and the more violent became strict in their inquiries respecting the doctrines of their members; while the more tolerant Presbyterians adhered to the principle of comprehensive and open communion."†

What authority the writer has for ascribing such an effect to these lamentable disputes does not appear. The distinctions between the two parties, so far as they related to church government and discipline, instead of being widened, were not in the least affected by them. I may here introduce a remarkable passage from the substance of two sermons, preached in London, in March, 1695, by Mr. Richard Mayo, a Presby-

\* Mr. Henry, in addressing the catechumens of a Presbyterian minister in 1713, after charging them to retain the remembrance of what they had been taught, that they might be *enriched with all good knowledge*, adds, "You must hold it fast *in Faith*. It is not enough to *remember* the good truths that are taught you, but you must mix them with faith, or they will not profit you. You let them go, though you remember them never so well, if you let go the *belief* of them, and the profession of your faith concerning them. You must give a firm assent to them as *faithful sayings*; must set to your seal that God is true, and every word of his is so, even that which you cannot comprehend the mystery of; as, the eternity of God, the immensity of all his perfections, the Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son of God, the operations of the Spirit upon the soul of man, and the like; yet, because they are things which God has revealed, you must subscribe to the truth of [them;] if you do not, you *make God a liar*, and do, in effect, make yourselves wiser than God, when you say, *how can this be?* whereas you should say, Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief."—Sermon concerning the Catechizing of Youth, p. 24. He then proceeds to explain the sentiments and affections with which the truths of Christianity must be received, and the practical influence and sanctifying effect of them, when truly known and sincerely believed.

† Hist. p. 20.

terian minister, who had taken an active part in the formation of the Union, to shew the sentiments entertained by calm and impartial observers concerning the minute and trifling nature of the real differences, when the controversy was raging:—

“ Never contend about those things which you do not fully understand. I might have mentioned Ignorance amongst the make-bates. This is certain, that most of our peace-breakers are persons that are very ignorant, that *know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm*. This may be truly said, that most of our contentions are mere logomachies; the strife among us, for the most part, is about words, and not things. There was a great strife of old between the Eastern and Western Churches. The Eastern Churches and Christians said, there were three Subsistences in the Trinity, but not three Persons. The Western said, there were three Persons, but not three Subsistences. *Athanasius* steps in, and reconciles them both. The contentions that were amongst the *Nestorians* and *Eutychians* were only verbal, so that we may wonder, and ask with the Apostle, ‘ If there was not a wise man among them?’ And what shall I say of the strife and division that is among the more religious people of this island at this day? It is unaccountable. A thinking Christian is ready to wonder, and say, Are there no wise men, and endued with knowledge, that can with meekness of wisdom compose these differences that are among us? Are they all such fools as Solomon describes, Prov. xviii. 6? I can’t say, that all the debates in England and London about matters of religion are merely verbal; but I dare affirm this of many, if not the most of them, nay, the greater part by far, of our litigant and contentious Christians, can give no account of those points about which they contend, nor do they know the hinges upon which the things in controversie turn. Here let me insert a story of modern date: Two persons lately met together at a friend’s house, where they had a great deal of warm discourse about those that go under the denomination of Presbyterians and Independents. One standing by, interposed, and desired them to inform him, what was the real difference betwixt those two sorts or parties. For a while there was deep silence, till anon he urged them to answer him, telling them, it was a most unseemly thing, for persons to contend about what they did not know or understand. At length one of them answered, The Independents were stricter in their admission of members into their particular congregations than the others were. Hereupon the other replied, that, to his knowledge, that was false; forasmuch as some that had been rejected for scandalous conversations, by Presbyterians, had been received into Independent congregations. This threw oil into the fire, and increased their warmth; till, by and by, this third person

began sharply to reprove them both, telling them, he expected to have heard of some difference in the principles of these parties, which might have made for his information; but all that he could hear did amount to no more, than that there was a difference in the practice of some particular congregations, which would be in the most reformed churches to the world's end. Therefore he desired them to lay aside those unchristian heats that were betwixt them, and not inveigh one against another, for they knew not what themselves. And his admonition was not ineffectual, for they parted good friends, and in a better temper.”\*

What was the peculiar mode of administering government, and conducting discipline, generally adopted among the Presbyterians, I am not prepared to state. It probably varied in different churches. Dr. Calamy, in a Charge delivered to several young ministers, in December, 1716, says—“Be not negligent of Christian Discipline;” which he informs them should be exercised by “reproving, or suspending, or rejecting from communion,” p. 34.†

“If,” say the English Presbyterian Association, “exclusion from the Lord’s table ever was a distinguishing characteristic of one body of Dissenters rather than another, it certainly was not of the English Presbyterians. The question is one merely of discipline, always admitted to belong to every church, and subject to every possible alteration, without interfering with questions of doctrine.”‡

To this a sufficient answer will be furnished by a passage which the writer himself has quoted from Mr. Peirce’s *Reflections upon Dean Sherlock’s Vindication of the Corporation and Test Acts, 1718*. I will give the entire quotation—“But any such power as this is disclaimed and abhorred by the Dissenters. They pretend not to impose upon the belief or

\* *The Cause and Cure of Strife and Divisions*, by Richard Mayo, Minister of God’s Word. 4to. 1695, pp. 25-27.

† “That God has appointed Government in his Church, they freely own: and it is an opinion that prevails much among them, that no one particular form of church government is of Right Divine; but, its being managed by more or fewer persons, with more or less of superiority and subordination, they look upon as comparatively indifferent, so that the end, which is Christian purity, be but subserved.”—*Calamy’s Brief Account*. 1717. p. 43.

‡ *Hist.* p. 32.

practice of any; they are against any other compulsion but that of reason and argument; they pretend not to extend their discipline to any but those of their own communion; they think they have no warrant for any proceedings with those of their own communion besides brotherly admonitions, and rejecting them from their communion in case of their denying the fundamental doctrines of Christianity; such as, that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, the Resurrection, &c.; or in case of plain immorality and wickedness.”\*

Another provision made by the Presbyterians for securing the continuance of orthodoxy in their families, and among the successive members of their congregations, was the communication of religious instruction to children and youth by means of catechisms; for which purpose the Shorter Catechism of the Assembly of Divines was in general, if not universal, use. For many years after the Toleration Act, it was, I believe, the invariable custom, in Presbyterian congregations, for the ministers to instruct the young persons of their flock in a catechetical form.

The ejected ministers were distinguished for the opinion entertained concerning the necessity, and the great pains taken by many of them in the management of this work, which they regarded not merely as the duty of parents, but also as an important branch of the ministerial office;† and which they conducted publicly,—a practice which was generally continued by their successors, and, in many places, during several generations.‡ Mr. Hunter states, that the meeting-houses erected for the celebration of public worship by Dissenters, after the Toleration Act, were “places also for the catechising of the young.”§

\* Hist. p. 24.

† “Use catechising. Heretofore catechising justled out preaching; now, preaching justles out catechising. Let the ship be ballasted with fundamental truths. Hearers will then not be so easily whirled about with every wind. Luther was called *discipulus catechismi*.”—Mr. Porter, 1659, from the MSS. of Rev. P. Henry—Life, edit. J. B. Williams, 1825, p. 29.

‡ “In some congregations, the youth are catechized on the afternoons of the Lord’s days, in others on the evenings, and in others on some week-day.”—Dr. Calamy’s Brief Account of the Protestant Dissenters, (1717,) p. 45.

§ Hist. Def. p. 9.

The excellent John Flavel, in the sermon already quoted, which he intended to deliver at Taunton in 1691, and which, when published after his death, was entitled “The Character of a complete Evangelical Pastor drawn by Christ,” from Matt. xxiv. 45—47, thus addresses his ministerial brethren:—

“*Prudence will direct us to lay a good foundation of knowledge in our people's souls, by catechising and instructing them in the principles of Christianity, without which we labour in vain.* All your excellent sermons will be dashed to pieces upon the rock of your people's ignorance. You can never pitch upon a better project to promote and secure the success of your labours, than the fruitful way of catechising. What age of Christianity ever produced more lively and stedfast Christians, than the first ages? And then the care of this duty most eminently flourished in the churches. Clemens Alexandrinus, Origen, Optatus, Basil, Austin, and Ambrose, were all catechists. And it is the opinion, both of Chemnitius and Zanchy, that that exercise which Christ honoured with his presence in his youth, was a *catechistical* exercise.

“We that live in this age, have as much *obligation* as they, and God hath furnished to our hands the *best help* for it, that ever any age since Christ enjoyed. As chymists extract the spirits of herbs and minerals into some rare *elixir*: so have our venerable Assembly (lately sitting at *Westminster*, now in glory) composed for us the most judicious and compendious system that ever blessed this age. And to make it yet more useful, divers worthy hands have been employed, some in one method, some in another, to make those compendious Answers more intelligible to the people. And yet I am of opinion, somewhat may be further done to advance that great design in a third method, that shall not only make those points more intelligible than in answering by *yea*, or *no*; or drawing out the subservient answers to such a length, as too much charges the people's memory, but withal to intermix the most useful *practical* matter with what is *doctrinal*.\* If such a course might obtain in all our congregations, I think it would greatly discover our prudence, and turn richly to the account of our people's profit. pp. 89—92.

In 1713, Mr. M. Henry published a Sermon concerning the Catechizing of Youth, preached [in London,] to Mr. Harris's Catechumens, April 7, from 2 Tim. i. 13, which fully explains the views then prevailing on this matter:

\* Mr. Flavel's Exposition of the Assembly's Catechism, with practical inferences from each question, as it was carried on in the Lord's Days Exercises at Dartmouth, in 1688, was published in 1692.



He understands by the form of sound words, “a brief summary of the Christian doctrine, and of all those things which are most surely believed among Christians—whether [he adds] a *Creed*, or *Confession* of Faith I cannot say; I rather think it was in the way of a *Catechism*, because that method of instruction was used in the early ages of the church; so that I think if we apply it especially to our *Catechisms*, we shall offer no violence at all in [to] the text.”\*

“It is good to have forms of these sound words drawn up, for the use of those that are to learn the first principles of the oracles of God; not to be *imposed* as of equal authority with the Scriptures, but to be *proposed* in order to the further study of the Scriptures. Bear us witness, we set up no other rule of faith and practice, no other oracle, no other touchstone or test of orthodoxy, but the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. These only are the fountains whence we fetch our knowledge; these only the foundations on which we build our faith and hope; these the *dernier resort* of all our enquiries and appeals in the things of God, for they only are given by divine inspiration. This is the principle we abide by, *to the law and to the testimony*—that’s the *regula regulans*—every other help we have for our souls we make use of as *regula regulata*, in subordination and subserviency to the Scripture; and among the rest, our catechisms and confessions of faith.†

“That which is intended in these forms of sound words, is not, like the Council of Trent, to make a new creed, and add it to what we have in the Scripture, but to collect and methodize the truths and laws of God, and to make them familiar. By these forms of sound words, the main principles of Christianity, which lie scattered in the Scripture, are collected and brought together. Our catechisms and confessions of faith pick up from the several parts of Holy Writ those passages which, though perhaps occasionally delivered, contain the *Essentials* of religion, the foundations and main pillars upon which Christianity is built, which we are concerned rightly to understand and firmly to believe, in the first place, and then to go on to perfection. We cannot contain all the Scripture, but there are some more weighty and comprehensive sayings, which, (like those which the Jews wrote in their phylacteries) we should bind for a sign upon our hand, and which should be as frontlets between our eyes. And our forms of sound words furnish us with these.‡

After mentioning the Ten Commandments and the Lord’s Prayer, he adds:—“The form of Baptism is another Divine form of sound words peculiar to the Christian dispensation; but that also needs to be explained by other Scriptures, as it is excellently well in the ancient creeds; which we receive and embrace, and greatly rejoice in,

\* p. 5.

† p. 8.

‡ pp. 9, 10.

as standing, lasting testimonies to the *faith once delivered to the saints*, Jude 3 ; which, by the grace of God, we will not only adhere to, but *earnestly contend for*, and live and die by. And all these divine forms of sound words you have fully and faithfully set before you, and opened to you in the Assembly's Larger and Shorter Catechisms ; as, blessed be God, they are in many other, both in our own and other Reformed Churches.\*

"They that are not catechized nor taught the forms of sound words, apprehend not what we mean when we speak of their misery by nature, the sinfulness of sin, the mediation of Christ, the operations of the Spirit, and the great things of the other world ; we had as good talk Greek to them.†

"Hereby you will be armed against the assaults and insinuations of *seducers*, and such as lie in wait to deceive, and draw you into the paths of error.‡

"Hereby you will be enabled to transmit, pure and entire, to those that come after you, that good thing which is committed to you. The truths and ordinances of Christ are a sacred *depositum*, a trust handed down to us by our predecessors in profession, and lodged in our hands, to be carefully kept in our day, and faithfully transferred to the generations to come. But how can we do that, if we be not ourselves both *rightly* and *fully* apprized of it. We are false to this trust, not only if we betray it by the admission of heresy and idolatry, but if we lose it, and let it drop by ignorance and carelessness, and unacquaintedness with, and unconcernedness for, the interests of Christianity.§

"Many have had the form of sound words, and with it a form of godliness, and a name to live, but have let them go, and lost them ; have made shipwreck of the faith and of their own souls. I know I speak to those that have the form of sound words, that have hold of it ; in God's name therefore I charge you to *hold it fast*, to keep your hold of it *in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus*. The Gospel is that by which we are saved, if we *keep in memory* what has been preached unto us. 'Tis necessary that you should be well acquainted with the *Mystery of the Gospel*, with your need of a Saviour, with the method in which the salvation was wrought out by the *Son of God*, and is applied by the *Spirit of God*."||

Mr. Henry had published, in 1703, a "Plain Catechism for Children," brief and simple ; in the address to the reader prefixed to which, he says—"The children into whose hands it is designed to be put, are supposed to have learnt the *Creed*, the *Lord's Prayer*, and the *Ten Commandments*, those first *forms of sound words* ; and then, perhaps, some time spent in

\* p. 11.

† pp. 5, 14.

‡ p. 15.

§ pp. 18, 19.

|| pp. 20, 21.

this, may prepare them afterwards to improve by the *fulness* and *accuracy* of the *Assembly's Catechism*, with which this doth very little interfere, and which, therefore, I hope it will not be suspected of a design to supersede."\* Such expressions clearly shew the high estimation in which the Shorter Catechism of the Assembly was held, and the general use made of it at that time.†

I will now insert some extracts from a discourse, preached at Newport Pagnel, Bucks, July 14, 1714, before an Association of Ministers, at whose request it was published the same year, by "John Cumming, M.A. Minister of the Gospel at Cambridge," and pastor of the Presbyterian congregation there. It was preached at the time when the Schism Bill was expected to pass—a measure of cruel persecution, happily frustrated by the death of a queen, who had proved herself a hopeless apostate from the cause of liberty—and is dedicated "To the Worshipful Edward Leeds, of Croxton, in the county of Cambridge, Esq." a firmly attached friend of the Dissenters, grandfather of the second wife of the illustrious philanthropist, John Howard—a name in which the Nonconformist body, especially the orthodox portion to which he belonged, though intimate with Dr. Price and other Arians, may be allowed to glory. In this excellent discourse, Mr. Cumming refers particularly to the declining state of religion, and the general corruption of manners then prevailing through the land; and intimates, that among Dissenters there were symptoms of a relaxation of *zeal* for some important points of the Calvinistic system, or at least of a shrinking from the open avowal and bold assertion of them. He thus addresses his ministerial brethren—

"We ought, in a special manner, to instruct and *catechize* the rising generation, the young and ignorant, in the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. This should be the main care of parents,

\* The ninth Edition of this Catechism was printed at Shrewsbury, by J. Eddowes.

† Mr. Henry published in 1702, and again in 1708 with the addition of proof-texts, a Scripture Catechism, in the method of the Assembly's, which exhibits the mode adopted by him in the discharge of this office, which he himself "indefatigably performed every Saturday afternoon."—See his *Life*, edit. Williams, pp. 130, 225.

with respect to their children. But the duty of parents will be no plea for the omitting what may lie in our power towards the religious education of the young ones that attend our ministry. No exercise was more in request at the Reformation, or more successful in promoting Christian knowledge, than Catechizing, and the good effects of it are still visible in those places where the greatest care is taken about it." He then refers to the restraint upon the religious education of their children, under the apprehension of which Dissenters were then trembling, which he represents as a penal visitation for their improving so little the privilege when they enjoyed it. "That," he adds, "which renders this restraint more grievous to us, and the farther views and designs of it more suspicious in themselves, is, that it strikes in a special manner at the Assembly's Catechism, which all the Reformed Churches look upon as the most excellent and unexceptionable *summary of the Christian Faith*, that is extant in the world. Something might be alleged for prohibiting schoolmasters and schoolmistresses to teach that *form of sound words*, if it had any thing in it repugnant to the doctrinal articles of the National Church, or contained any reflections upon her ecclesiastical polity, but this can't be pretended; so that the very doctrines of the Gospel, asserted and explained therein, seem to be levelled at; which can gratify none but Papists and Arminians, and such as are for changing their own articles and homilies, and rendering them more compliant to the Romish principles. This should be a powerful argument to induce us to double our diligence for the time to come, in explaining the great truths of the Gospel to young people in the familiar way of catechizing, whereby they may be more capable to understand what we preach; especially considering the gross ignorance of the scriptures that has spread itself over the land." pp. 31, 32.

It appears from other passages of the discourse, that among the *ministers*, at least in that part of the country, this "great duty" had fallen into "partial neglect;" but in private families it long continued the uniform practice of parents to use this Catechism for the purpose of instructing their youthful offspring in what Mr. Cumming calls "the doctrine of salvation." Mr. Peirce, who himself professed to be a moderate Calvinist, thus delivers his opinion of it—"Although I will not vindicate every expression in it, yet in the main I will venture to commend it as the best and most orderly summary of religion I have met with, considering the bigness of it. Let the foreign divines compare it with the catechism of the book of common prayer: I am sure we need not fear the verdict.

"Tis translated into Greek and Latin, by Mr. Harmar.\* And what reputation it gained among pious and learned men, we may guess by what Mr. Hickman says of two famous divines: 'When a copy of it was sent to Mr. Peter du Moulin, he returned this answer, that he never saw a more perfect catechism; nor did archbishop Usher less esteem it.' "†

Mr. Neal, as already mentioned, states that the Independents, in 1736, "agreed with the Presbyterians in the use of this Catechism in their families." The English Presbyterian Association intimate that the Independents formerly required subscription to it;‡ but I am not aware that such was at any time their practice, or that, even on extraordinary occasions, the whole, or any part, was *imposed* as a test of orthodoxy.

In 1700 was published, "The Baptist Catechism; agreeably to the *Confession of Faith*, put forth by the Elders and Brethren of many Congregations of Christians (baptized upon Profession of their Faith) in London and in the Country; owning the Doctrines of Personal Election and Final Perseverance." The following address to the reader, prefixed, will explain the design and circumstances of its publication:—"Having a desire to shew our near agreement with many other Christians, of whom we have great esteem, we some years since put forth a Confession of our Faith, almost in all points the same with that of the Assembly and Savoy, which was subscribed by the elders and messengers of many churches, baptized on profession of their faith; and do now put forth a short account of Christian principles, for the instruction of our families, in most things agreeing with the Shorter Catechism of the Assembly. And this we were the rather induced to, because we have commonly made use of that catechism in our families; and the difference being not much, it will be more easily committed to memory." §

\* In conjunction with Du Gard, Cantab. per J. Field, 1659. Preface to Doolittle's Complete Body of Divinity.

† Vindic. of Dissenters, second edit. corrected, 1718, p. 210.

‡ Hist. p. 89.

§ Editions of this Catechism, with and without the Scripture-proofs, were printed at Bristol in 1775. A Scriptural Exposition of it was published in 1752, by Rev. Benjamin Beddome, M.A. an excellent minister of the Baptist denomination.

One of the most zealous advocates for the practice of ministerial catechizing, was Mr. Thomas Doolittle, an ejected minister, afterwards pastor of a Presbyterian congregation which formerly met in Monkwell-street, London (now extinct); of whom Dr. Calamy says: "He was a warm, practical preacher, and his catechizing was profitable to many."\*

In 1698 he published, "in compassion to the ignorant, a Plain Method of Catechizing; shewing that Ministers, Parents, and Masters, ought to be faithful Teachers of the first Principles of the Christian Doctrine." In 1723, several years after his death, (in 1707,)† was published, in a folio volume, "A Complete Body of Practical Divinity; being a new Improvement of the Assembly's Catechism, wherein the Truths and Duties of Christianity are applied to the Conscience in a most serious and pathetic manner."‡ Prefixed to the work, is a short recommendatory notice, accompanied by a brief account of the author; in which we are informed that he looked on the Assembly's Catechism as an excellent summary of Christian doctrine, collected from the holy scriptures, and agreeing with them. Some part of this he opened every Lord's day; and in a Wednesday lecture, set up on purpose, he went through the whole in a method most grateful and profitable, though perfectly new. The publication, which "had long been desired," is then recommended to the world as a work that may prove of singular service to the church of God. This recommendation is subscribed by twenty names, being those of some of the most eminent Presbyterian and Congregational ministers of London, the larger number belonging to the former class.

I shall now advert to the alleged silence of trust deeds—

\* Contin. p. 75.

† His Funeral Sermon, preached by Dr. Daniel Williams, may be seen in Vol. ii. of the doctor's works.

‡ In the Memoirs of his Life, prefixed to this volume, we are told—"He had a great felicity and delight in catechizing, and urged ministers to it, as of special tendency to propagate knowledge, establish persons in the truth, and prepare them to read and hear sermons with greater advantage. The Assembly's Catechism he greatly valued as a *form of sound words*; two expositions of which he published in his lifetime, and left that which follows prepared for the press with his own hand."

a circumstance to which great importance is attached. The following passages exhibit the views of the writer who is the organ of the English Presbyterian Association—"With hardly an exception, all the Presbyterian trust-deeds are without restrictions, and contain no clauses of restraint of the course of opinion in the congregations for whose use they were immediately founded. Neither the minister nor his congregation are bound to pursue any given set of doctrines. Every freedom is afforded to the pursuit of theological inquiries." "Had the perpetuation of a peculiar system of discipline or doctrine been intended, what prevented the declaration of such an intent? Why are the deeds silent respecting the unsound doctrines, when the Nonconformist world was ringing with the controversy, as to whether heresy should or should not be repressed by subscription? If endowments to propagate Calvinism, or to support chapels and a ministry favouring it, were intended, why were no fences erected to prevent the prevalence of errors, as some represent them to be, which were seen and were debated by the very persons whose indignation we are now told would have been excited by them?"\*

The force of this array of interrogatories will be destroyed by the bare statement of two historical facts in connexion with dates;—and the reader cannot fail to observe that chronological accuracy is of the greatest importance in this inquiry.

1. The controversy as to whether heresy should or should not be repressed by subscription, with which the Nonconformist world, according to this writer, was ringing, at the time when the original trust-deeds of the Presbyterian chapels were framed, did not arise till 1719. The controversy of 1692-9 was totally unconnected with any such question.

2. Nearly all the ancient Presbyterian chapels now in existence were erected previously to 1719—a great number, between 1688 and 1696—I believe very few so late as 1719. On this point Mr. Cooper bears decisive testimony—"Within a single lustre after the revolution of 1688, and the passing of the Toleration act, Presbyterianism covered the country with a thousand meeting-houses."† The fact is

\* Hist. pp. 50, 51.

† Substance of Speech, p. 10.

stated with more precise accuracy by Mr. Hunter, who, after telling us that at the Revolution the whole Nonconforming body set themselves to form congregations, and to erect meeting-houses in every part of England, adds, "Between 1689 and 1693 was the chief period of the work;" and subsequently mentions, that the whole number of congregations, founded in the first twenty years after the passing of the Toleration act, by Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists, amounted in England to between one thousand and eleven hundred.\* He afterwards says, "The trust-deeds of the Presbyterian foundations generally are free from any restrictive clauses in respect to doctrine; so that there is no ground whatever from these deeds to support the opinion that the founders meant to fetter the ministers or their congregations in their theological inquiries, or to prevent them from acknowledging and professing that truth which future inquiries might bring to light."† The question is not whether these pious founders intended to impose any restraint upon the exercise of individual rights; but, whether they meant that persons, who embraced certain tenets deemed by them fundamentally erroneous, should be permitted to occupy the pulpits and pews of meeting-houses erected by them. If they fixed no limits to the theological inquiries of those who might hereafter claim to occupy these meeting-houses, a rejection of the Divine authority of revelation would not amount to a disqualification.

Not having obtained a sight of many original trust-deeds of Dissenters' chapels, I can only state, that in those which I have seen, the description of the purposes for which the property was to be appropriated is expressed in general terms. Mr. Hunter, however, admits that there are exceptions,‡ and I have heard of several chapels in Lancashire, now occupied by Unitarian congregations, the trust-deeds of which require the ministers to teach the Assembly's catechism. It certainly was taught in many Presbyterian chapels in England till about the middle of the last century, and in some probably still later.§

\* Hist. Def. pp. 8, 9.

† Ib. p. 37.

‡ Ib. p. 40.

§ I will mention one instance, in which I have private means of information. What is called "the Great Meeting-house," at Coventry, is one of the oldest Presby-



The question may be treated as purely one of historical fact, with a view to ascertain, by means of appropriate evidence, what were the real opinions and sentiments of a particular class of persons at a certain period, without adverting to the legal position at that time of those who held obnoxious tenets, the propagation of which was rendered penal by acts of parliament, or adverting to it only as involving another important fact—that the persons to whom this inquiry relates, approved of such a state of the law, and so far coincided in judgment and feeling with the legislature. Without making any appeal to prohibitory statutes, though it were only for the purpose of using them as a medium of proof, and not as furnishing an independent ground of argument;—without even referring to the illegality of any religious profession, the entire case becomes plain and simple when resolved into one of *intention* on the part of the original founders. That abstract intention, independently of the state of the law—not indeed without reference to their approbation of it, yet irrespectively of all penal disabilities imposed by the legislature—is, at least, the only point which it is my present object to determine.

I entirely concur in the principle laid down by the English Presbyterian Association, “in order to determine on the due administration of any charity, it is necessary to ascertain the intent of its founder.”\* Let us apply this principle to the matter under discussion. Here are trusts created, as I may concede, in “exceedingly general terms,” by a class of persons who, though constrained by conscientious conviction to separate from the Established Church, avowed their agreement with it in doctrine. The fact, indeed, is admitted by this writer, but he ingeniously avails himself of it, to deduce a

terian erections, and was formerly occupied by one of the most respectable and flourishing congregations, now greatly reduced, and, I am informed, completely Unitarian. In that chapel some of my ancestors worshipped, and my paternal grandmother, (to whose venerable memory I cannot forbear inserting this passing tribute of affectionate respect,) was in her youth one of those who were there publicly examined in the Assembly's Catechism by Mr. Warren, the last orthodox minister, who was a moderate Calvinist. Whether any restrictive clause is to be found in the original trust-deed, I know not, but the fact appears little material to the present argument.

\* Hist p. 52.

startling inference, which, however, he does not venture to express in direct terms. The premises which he states, and the conclusion at which he evidently wishes the reader to arrive, though this he merely insinuates, may be thus put:—"The founders of Presbyterian chapels generally agreed with the Church in doctrinal opinion;" this renders it apparent that *doctrine* could not have been "the leading consideration," which operated as an inducement on their minds to the erection of these chapels, and the creation of the trusts attached to them: *therefore* the founders were altogether unconcerned about doctrine! Admitting the fact, that, considered merely as a motive or reason for the erection of these chapels, doctrine scarcely entered into their contemplation; does it follow that they cared nothing about doctrine? The fact proves, indeed, that they were not indifferent to what they considered a scriptural form of worship and discipline. The *immediate* object which, as a distinct class of religious professors, they had in view, related to the mode of conducting divine service; but when this writer says, "nothing seems clearer than that these foundations were not established with a view to the maintenance of *any* doctrine as opposed to another, or in assertion of any point which can strictly be called a point of *faith*,"\* I am at a loss to discover the sequence. They professed accordance with the established church on doctrinal points—they gloried in their *orthodoxy*; but, because they could not conscientiously join in rites and ceremonies which they held to be unlawful, and worship God statedly by a liturgy, which, in many respects they disapproved; *therefore* their sole feeling, in reference to doctrine, was one of total indifference! Doctrine might, indeed, be a collateral consideration with them, considered as founders of separate congregations under the Toleration Act, and, regarded merely in that view, such must have been the fact, because their doctrinal tenets coincided with those of the Established Church; but, intrinsically considered, it was of the highest value in their estimation, as a body of religious professors, believing not only in the Christian Scriptures as a divine revelation, but eminently in its great distinguish-

\* Hist. p. 61.

ing truths. If it can be proved, *aliunde*—and I appeal to the reader whether this has not been done—that the whole body of Presbyterians, during the period in question, attached the greatest importance to what they considered to be doctrinal orthodoxy, at least in reference to what they regarded as the great vital points, the fundamental articles of Christianity,—the mere circumstance, that legal instruments, framed by professional men, exclusively for legal purposes, and of course accommodated to the existing state of the law, contain no restrictive clauses, because prepared at a time when such clauses were not necessary for any legal purpose—a mere circumstance of this kind, (granting it to have been the general fact,) may surely be explained, without having recourse to a supposition in itself highly improbable, and, moreover, contradicted by positive evidence—that *all* diversities of doctrine were in their view alike. The true solution,—one at least bearing much stronger traits of verisimilitude, and, I doubt not, in accordance with the real fact, is—that they did not anticipate the future occurrence of any thing like the fearful aberration from that “faith once delivered to the saints,” for which *they* were prepared to “contend earnestly,” which subsequently (though by a very gradual process, a slow and almost imperceptible declension) took place among their successors. It did not enter into their imagination to conceive such an awful degree of “doctrinal deviation and degeneracy” as even possible.

The following strange combination and confusion of ideas may serve to expose the fallacy which lurks under the specious guise of argument, by a fair *reductio ad absurdum*:—“The founders [it is said] were orthodox. Granted; but it is nevertheless denied, that those who do not agree in the doctrine of the Trinity are not orthodox also, in the proper sense of those who insisted on the Scripture as the only rule of faith, of which each, according to his ability, was the true and only judge.”\* The Presbyterian founders, adopting as a principle,

\* A nice distinction is taken between non-agreement and denial; but modern Unitarians, in most pointed and positive terms, entirely reject and abandon the doctrine.—Hist. P. 62.

that the truth of religious opinions is not to be ultimately measured by any *human* standard, but by the word of God, which every one may examine and interpret for himself; and, acting upon that principle, embraced Trinitarian opinions, which they undoubtedly considered to be orthodox, “in the *proper* sense” of that word. These and other kindred opinions are exhibited and defended in the published works of Baxter, Bates, Howe, and other eminent Presbyterian divines. But, can any one suppose for a moment that if Priestley, Belsham, and Lindsey had been then living, and allowed by law to disseminate their pernicious tenets, or if their writings had been then extant, such religious teachers, and the distinguished theologians above named, could have been esteemed alike orthodox, “in the proper sense” attached to that word by persons who, while they “insisted on the Scripture as the only rule of faith,” and maintained the right of private and individual judgment, held sound doctrine in the highest estimation?\*

Mr. Hunter admits, that when the Presbyterian chapels were founded, “there was no question between the Presbyterians and the Church of England respecting doctrine;” and thus concedes, in effect, the Calvinistic orthodoxy of the founders.† His view of the design of these foundations slightly differs from that stated by the Presbyterian Association; though both may be correct, and I dispute not the accuracy of either. According to him, the chapels were founded, “in order to enable the ejected ministry, and the ministers formed by them, to conduct public services in what was supposed to be a more effective and interesting manner than the church had prescribed for its ministers.”§ He proceeds, in contradiction to evidence of which much has been produced, and much more might be produced, to add—“Neither is there any reason to believe that zeal

\* As to the Norwich charity, mentioned by the E. P. Association, as being a foundation by a professed Arian, for “Protestant Dissenting ministers,” though the exact date and other particular circumstances are not mentioned, sufficient appears to shew that it belongs to a different class of cases.—Hist. pp. 49, 142, 144.

† The early Presbyterians unquestionably considered the doctrine of the thirty-nine articles to be Calvinistic. See p. 149, ante.

for what are called orthodox opinions, which is founded on the principle that a peculiar faith is essential to salvation, actuated the minds of the Presbyterian founders." As mere *opinions*, indeed, they might esteem them of little value, but as embodying most of those great facts and principles which modern Unitarians deny, they held the lively and practical belief of them "essential to the enjoyment of heavenly happiness." That they did consider "a peculiar *faith* essential to salvation," I have attempted to prove. That peculiar faith included, at least, the doctrine of the Trinity, or a belief in God,—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Yet "the notion that their chapels were founded as Trinitarian chapels, in the same sense as a new foundation by Unitarians would be called the Unitarian chapel," is, we are told, false and delusive, because "doctrine had little or nothing to do with the operation."\* On the contrary, the open profession of doctrine, and such doctrine as is now commonly designated evangelical, was the very basis on which their churches were originally founded. They considered the Church of God as "the pillar and ground of the truth" embodied in that confessedly great mystery of godliness—"God was manifest in the flesh," &c. 1 Tim. iii. 16.† The entire Christian community they regarded as a body set apart to uphold and maintain, by a public profession, "the truth which is according to godliness." The first of the Heads of Agreement, in 1691, defines the catholic church in this world, as "the whole multitude of visible *believers*;" and the eighth requires that every particular church "not only acknowledge the scriptures to be the word of God, the perfect and only rule both of faith and practice," but also "own,"—(not as an authoritative standard of orthodoxy, but as a convenient and suitable measure or rule‡ by which to ascertain and determine soundness of judgment in matters of faith,)—"the doctrinal part of the 39 Articles, or the Confessions or Catechisms

\* Hist. Def. p. 38.

† The common reading of this passage has been ably defended in a learned critical examination, entitled "The Great Mystery of Godliness incontrovertible," by Dr. Ebenezer Henderson, Theological Professor at Highbury College, 8vo. 1830.

‡ *Mensura mensurata, non mensurans*, according to Howe; *regula regulata, non regulans*, according to Matthew Henry. See pp. 116, 185, ante.

of the Westminster Assembly, or the Savoy Confession"\*—all strongly Trinitarian, and decidedly Calvinistic.

The Presbyterians, at least till the end of the seventeenth century, solemnly professed adherence to all these symbols of faith, and subscribed the doctrinal Articles *ex animo* for many years after. Nor did they only "think their own views concerning the Christian doctrine to be the truth;" they also insisted upon the "peculiar views of gospel truth" which they entertained on the doctrine of the Trinity, and other fundamental articles, (at least in substance and effect,) as "essential;" or, in other words, they held that those who rejected and denied what they considered essential parts of the Christian system were not true believers, and consequently, in the strict and proper sense of that word, not real Christians. Taking, however, the lower ground, and merely assuming that they "thought their own views to be the truth," which, as Mr. Hunter justly says, "all other persons do," could they have *intended* that their endowments might be afterwards appropriated to the support and propagation of what they *must*, therefore, have regarded as error, and we have abundant means of knowing that they did, in fact, regard as dangerous and malignant error? The Trinitarian and Unitarian systems of doctrine cannot both be true, being opposite and contrary.† If, therefore, the Presbyterian founders intended to create trusts for the support of Trinitarian worship, they must have "established them with a view to the maintenance of Trinitarian sentiments against, or as opposed to, Unitarian;"§ for surely it cannot be pretended that they established them equally for either, or alike indifferently for both. But if I have succeeded in shewing that they believed the doctrine of the Trinity, as expressed in the form of baptism contained in the apostolical commission, to be one of those fundamental truths of Christianity which "can strictly be called a point of faith," it will follow, from the nature and design of the ordinance, in the administration

\* Pp. 53, 56, ante.

† The E. P. Association speak of "the *opposite* doctrine," p. 79, and "the *contrary* system of opinions" [to the Unitarian,] p. 94; and another writer admits that "the opinions styled orthodox are *opposed* even to Arian opinions."—Observations on the Title of Unitarians, &c. p. 15.

§ Hist. p. 61.

of which it is thus embodied, and the place which that ordinance occupies in the Christian economy that it pervades, and imparts a Trinitarian character to the entire system of Christian truth. It may, on this more general ground, be safely asserted that, if they intended the meeting-houses which they erected and endowed to be appropriated, in all future time, for Christian worship by Protestant Dissenters, they intended them for the use of congregations who should adopt Trinitarian, in distinction from, and consequently in opposition to, that which is now called "Unitarian worship."

The account given by both these writers, of the particular design of those erections, will confirm the accuracy of the representation above made. "They were founded," say the English Presbyterian Association, "to secure the benefit of regular religious worship, unfettered by liturgies, and the advantage of Christian ordinances in what appeared to be a scriptural form. This was the object, and the trusts were created merely to secure it."\* But what kind of religious worship? Was it "worship conducted upon Unitarian principles," or Trinitarian in its entire character? And Christian ordinances administered in what mode? the Socinian, or that approved and used by Presbyterian ministers? They adopted in performing the baptismal rite, what appeared to them the scriptural form—a solemn dedication to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as one God. This view of the ordinance, modern Unitarians cannot approve; nor do their ministers, I apprehend, use the words generally considered to have been prescribed as the standing formula of that rite. Their mode of administering the other Christian sacrament must be equally remote from the views entertained by the early Presbyterians, in harmony with those of Baxter and his brethren, who, in their reformed liturgy, thus describe the design of that ordinance:—"To commemorate the Sacrifice of Christ's body and blood upon the cross, once offered up to God for sin."†

\* Hist. pp. 61, 62.

† Among the "holy Qualifications" of those who are to be admitted as communicants or "Members of the Church," the first is, "A true belief of the Articles of the Christian Faith, concerning Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; the Person, offices, works, and sufferings, and benefits of Christ." The Reformed Liturgy annexed to Calamy's Abridgment of the Life of Baxter, pp 25, 26.

Mr. Hunter, speaking of "what was done during a few years after the Act of Toleration in 1688, by the Nonconformists, and by the Presbyterian section especially, to give consistency and perpetuity to their efforts, and to form a body of persons who are capable of a distinct consideration," thus describes the object which they had in view in the erection of meeting-houses throughout England:—"Their aim was nothing less than the establishment of a kind of second church, in which provision should be made for public religious instruction, divine worship, and the ministration of Christian ordinances by ministers no longer fettered by Subscription or a Liturgy."\* He afterwards tells us, that "these meeting-houses, or chapels, were placed under the protection of the law in the manner prescribed in the Act of Toleration, and devoted to the purpose for which they were erected, by a religious service, the same in principle, and differing only in form, with the consecration-service of the Church:" and speaking of the deeds by which they were conveyed to certain persons to hold in trust for the use of the congregation, he says, "the declaration of uses is commonly to allow a congregation of Protestant Dissenters to assemble for the worship of God, and such minister to officiate as shall be elected by a majority of the congregation to be their pastor."† All this I do not dispute; but again I ask, what was "*the purpose* for which they were erected," as they were places for public religious instruction, divine worship, and the ministration of Christian ordinances, (for this, Mr. Hunter allows, was the primary and original design of their erection,) unmixed indeed with human inventions, and unfettered by human impositions, but to be conducted in a manner agreeable to Scripture, strictly conformed to the original divine institution,—in other words, for what in the judgment of their founders might properly be designated *Christian* instruction, *Christian* worship, and the ministration, in a purely scriptural form, of the ordinances instituted by the Christian Legislator?

For confirmation, if any were needed, of the view just given of the intention of the Presbyterian Nonconformists in erecting chapels, in which separate congregations might carry on divine

\* Hist. Def. p. 9.

† Ib. p. 10.



worship, and observe Christian ordinances, I will refer to some of the few extracts which the English Presbyterian Association have given from their writings. In two sermons, preached in March, 1712, by Dr. Wright, he states, that while the *Dissenters* adhered to the way of worship “which they thought most agreeable to Scripture,” and contended for this, as the *grand point*, that no terms of communion be insisted on but such as are there laid down, which he calls “standing up for the *original plan* of our religion, and the first pure, unmixed institutions of it;” they would only admit within the *sacred enclosure* of the church “those who sincerely believe and obey the *Gospel*.”\* In another extract from a sermon by Dr. Harris, (colleague with Dr. Lardner,) preached in 1729, the fit subjects of Christian communion are thus described—“those who have all the essentials of the Gospel religion, and whom Christ will own at last.”† Whether they considered the Socinians of their time as a class of persons answering to this description, I leave the reader to decide.

“The new Independents (as Mr. Hunter is pleased to call the modern Congregational Dissenters) act,” he tells us, “in a very different spirit” from the Presbyterian founders. “They *have* this zeal for their own peculiar views, and they seek to perpetuate them in their foundations. Clauses, I am told, are generally introduced into their Trust-deeds, binding down the minister and congregation to some settled form of religious belief.”‡ It is now, I believe, the general practice, to insert in these legal instruments what may be called protecting clauses, not for the purpose of binding the minister, or individual members of the congregation, to any human creed or articles, but of securing the chapel and premises to those who hold what the founders regard as the orthodox faith, and thus guarding the trusts created by them from what *they*, at least, would consider as a flagrant violation. This mode of securing the future appropriation of places of religious worship to the purposes originally intended by those at whose expense they are erected, appears to me a reasonable proceeding. Mr. Hunter represents it as an interference with “the duty and the right

\* Hist. p. 43.

† Ib. p. 42.

‡ Hist. Def. p. 39.

of private judgment;" but, in my opinion, that is far from being a correct view of the subject. No restraint is imposed on the exercise of this right by individuals. Such clauses merely purport that the chapel is built for the preaching of a particular kind of doctrine. All future ministers must therefore believe and preach that doctrine, or vacate the pulpit. As to hearers and subscribers, if they do not approve of the doctrine held by the founders, they may at any time withdraw their attendance and subscriptions. But in several places those who approve of that doctrine have been compelled to withdraw. The necessity of such protecting clauses has been proved by the history of too many Presbyterian congregations; and since the law now (very properly) allows all sects professing Christianity openly to propagate their opinions, and affords special protection to their preachers, it has become the more important that the purpose of the trust should be stated in a specific and definite manner. I have no doubt, however, that upon examination it would appear, that the original trust-deeds of the more ancient Independent meeting-houses were expressed in the same general terms as those of many Presbyterian chapels. "That those founders *intended* to do what they *have* done," would indeed be "one of the most natural and legitimate of inferences," if the fact assumed were correctly stated. Before *such* intention can be proved, evidence should be produced to shew that they ever contemplated the possibility of what has unhappily taken place. After the ample historical evidence that has been produced, every reader is in possession of sufficient data to enable him to decide the point now under discussion, since the only question, as admitted on both sides, is, what was the real *intention* of the founders?—I say, what *was* their intention—not what *might* have been, under other than existing circumstances, or what, it may be supposed, *would* have been their intention had they lived a century later, of which no human tribunal is competent to take cognizance.

No charge, in my view, can be more unjust or inappropriate, than that of persecution against those who contend that persons who have forsaken nearly all the great doctrines peculiar to Christianity, as held by these founders, are

not the class of beneficiaries for whom the trusts created by them were intended. Mr. Hunter, who speaks of it as "a case of pure persecution for religious opinion," says, "there is no doubt that the present possessors are the rightful representatives of the founders, if the question be considered as a question of representation."\* But, notwithstanding some pathetic appeals to the reader's feelings, the question, I submit, is not at all one of representation, with regard to particular *persons* or *families*, but entirely one of intention in respect to a *class* or description of religious professors and divine worshippers. The mere circumstance of trustees or ministers being "descendants or relatives of their predecessors, or having followed them in regular series," cannot, surely, in a matter which is neither one of "hereditary descent nor of corporate succession,"† establish the claim of parties who belong not to the *class* which alone the founders contemplated.

I proceed to notice the grand means taken by the original Presbyterians to preserve the pulpits of their chapels from the intrusion of erroneous teachers, and thus to secure the continued orthodoxy of their successors. This was not only the instituting of previous examination into the qualifications, and especially the theological attainments, of all candidates for the ministerial office, but also the requiring of explicit statements and declarations of their faith, previously to their being solemnly set apart to that office. It may first be proper briefly to advert to the subject of ordination, especially as that was one upon which, in the earlier periods of their history, a considerable difference of opinion existed between the Presbyterians and Independents. Among the "many things" which Baxter "disliked in the Independent way," one, and the first which he mentions, was, that "they made too light of ordination."‡ When he treated with Mr. Philip Nye, about an agreement with the Independents, he tells us, "the greatest difference was upon the point of ordination." The earlier and more rigid Independents attached little importance to this rite, whereas all the Presbyterians laid great

\* Hist. Def. p. 68.

† Hist. p. 26.

‡ Narrative of his own Life, part ii. p. 188.

stress upon it: the former held that the parties by whom it should be administered were the people, or at least the other officers of the church over which the pastor was to be set apart; the latter approved and practised only what was commonly called "ministerial ordination:" the former, I believe, generally objected to its being accompanied by imposition of hands, which the Presbyterian ministers invariably used in the performance of that solemnity.\* Of the mode adopted at ordinations, during what may be called the reign of the Presbyterians, several accounts are preserved. The certificates subscribed on those occasions, by the officiating ministers, state, that, after formal examination of the party, they had "solemnly set him apart to the office of a Presbyter, and work of the ministry of the gospel, by laying on of their hands, with fasting and prayer; by virtue whereof they declare him to be a lawful and sufficiently authorized minister of Jesus Christ."† Baxter describes this as "authoritative ecclesiastical ordination;" and the light in which it was generally viewed by the early Presbyterian ministers was that, not merely of a public act of designation to the sacred office, or a solemn rite of inauguration, but also of an actual investiture with authority to preach the gospel and administer the ordinances of Christianity. They consequently regarded it as an indispensable prerequisite to the stated exercise of the Christian ministry.

One of the greatest objections felt by the Presbyterian divines to the terms of ministerial conformity prescribed by the Act of Uniformity, was the submission it required from those who had not been previously ordained by English prelates, to re-ordination by them; and for many years after,

\* See History of Diss. vol. ii. p. 124. Life of Mat. Henry, edit. J. B. Williams, p. 148. Dr. Owen, however, expressly states, that one of the things "required unto officers of the church," is, "the solemn setting them apart by imposition of hands," which he calls "the symbol of authoritative ordination." Enquiry into the True Nature, &c. of Evangelical Churches, pp. 83, 85, 139. There was a difference of opinion, in reference to this rite, among the Baptists. See History of Dissenters by Bogue and Bennet, vol. ii. pp. 125, 126.

† Calamy's Contin. pp. 66, 82. Toulmin's Historical View, pp. 272, 273.

‡ Appendix to Narrative of Life, pp. 26, 27.

there was no point for which they more earnestly contended than the validity of Presbyterian ordination, or the ordaining power of Presbyters, in opposition to the exclusive claims and arrogant pretensions of diocesan bishops. Their maxim was that ascribed by Baxter to Archbishop Usher—“*Ordinis est ordinare*; he that is in orders may confer orders;” and, though regarded by advocates of the Divine institution of prelatical episcopacy, as themselves mere pretenders to holy orders, they claimed and exercised the right of transmitting them to others.

The Congregational ministers, about the time of the Revolution, were generally in favour of ministerial ordination; and in 1691, the fifth Article of the second Head of Agreement, declares, that in the ordination of a pastor over a particular church, “’tis ordinarily requisite that the pastors of neighbouring congregations concur with the preaching elder or elders, if such there be.”\* Nothing is said concerning imposition of hands, which was probably left to the discretion of the several ministers engaged at these services, in which both classes united. But it continued to be practised by the Presbyterians for many years, and was generally, I believe, afterwards adopted by the Independents. Some leading Pres-

\* It appears from *Animadversions on a Letter from a Congregational minister in the country to Dr. Calamy*, annexed to Part ii. of his *Defence of Moderate Nonconformity*, 1704, that there were at that time some Independents who held that ministerial ordination had no warrant in scripture. Dr. Calamy says, “it looked strange there should be so much ignorance of the principles and practice of those of the *Congregational way*, in one that pretends so much zeal for it.” P. 391. He refers to the clause in the Heads of Agreement, concerning ordination, and adds: “This being so directly contradicted by the author of this letter, I think I may safely gather, that if he be a *Congregational brother*, he never assented to these Heads of Agreement.” P. 397. In answer to one of the Questions put to him by this writer, “What are you? A rigid *Presbyterian*, or a *Latitudinarian*? How can your stiffness and your freedom be reconciled?” he says, “You may give me what name you please, provided you’ll give me but leave jointly to pursue the interests of truth and charity. My chief *stiffness* is against *unscriptural impositions*; in which I should think I might depend upon my Congregational brother’s hearty concurrence. My *freedom* is no other than what, as far as I can judge, the word of God will warrant, and therefore not justly liable to blame. All that I aim at upon this head is, that a true scriptural ordination may not be run down for want of an ecclesiastical nicety; nor an irregular intrusion into the ministry encouraged

byterian divines, after the Act of Toleration, hesitated to take part in the ordination of a new race of ministers, then rising up; or, as the English Presbyterian Association express it, shewed "a great unwillingness to perpetuate, by ordination, a dissenting ministry."\* The first service of this nature, publicly held in the metropolis, was performed June 22, 1694; but in various parts of the country, particularly in the north of England, instances had occurred of public ordination some years previously. This service was peculiarly solemn, and occupied upwards of eight hours. The persons who officiated were six ejected ministers, Drs. Annesley and Williams, Messrs. Alsop, Sylvester, Stretton, and Kentish. The persons ordained were seven, of whom one was Dr. Calamy, who tells us he "did not pretend, while a *probationer*, to act with the attested authority of an ordained minister, and did not in this time baptize, because he knew he had not a commission."

Dr. Williams called for the Confessions of faith of two of the candidates, and put the usual Questions to them out of the Directory of the Westminster Assembly, as the other ordaining ministers did, respectively, from the other candidates. Previously to the ordination, they had been strictly examined, both in philosophy and divinity; and every one made and defended a thesis upon a theological question, being warmly opposed by the several ministers present.† The same method was pursued in the ordination of ministers in the country, of which several instances may be found in the *Life of Matthew Henry*, between the years 1692 and 1708.‡ On

for want of a solemn investiture into that sacred office." . . . "I'm stiff for the rule of Scripture, both against those who represent an ecclesiastical bishop as absolutely necessary, and those who look upon the agency of any ministers at all in ordination to be unrequired and insignificant." Pp. 412, 413. \* Hist. P. 17.

† Dr. Calamy says, "I was very strictly examined by Mr. Alsop. It fell to my lot to make and defend a Latin *Thesis* upon this question, (which he himself gave me,) *An Christus officio Sacerdotali fungatur in cœlis tantum?* He, for argument sake, as is the way of the schools, opposed me with all the vigour, smartness, and fluency of a young man, though he was then considerably advanced in years.—Calamy's Own Life, Vol. 1. pp. 348—350.

‡ Edit. Williams pp. 141—147.

June 18, 1700, he joined with the ministers of Lancashire and Cheshire in an ordination at Macclesfield, at which the Moderator "demanded of the candidates, in order, a Confession of their faith, and a distinct answer to the Questions; which was done fully."\* April 12, 1708, he tells us, "Mr. Lawrence and I examined Mr. Beynon, (the day previous to that fixed for his ordination.) Mr. Tallents had given him his thesis—*Justitia quâ coram Deo subsistimus est Justitia Christi Mediatoris*,—"The righteousness by which we are justified before God, is the righteousness of Christ the Mediator."†

I will now advert particularly to a fact of which there is ample evidence, but which has been denied in the most positive terms by the English Presbyterian Association. Mr. Hunter has accurately stated what he has thought proper to communicate on the mode of performing this solemn rite which prevailed among the Presbyterians.‡ He also speaks of "Presbyterian ordination,"§ and states that Mr. Jollie was

\* Life edit. Williams, p. 143.

† Ib. p. 146.

‡ "Another important object which engaged their attention, was the making provision for a succession of well-educated ministers. The early Presbyterian ministry were all men of education, and possessing considerable acquirements in theological and general knowledge. The notion of lay-preaching, or of admitting into the ministry any persons who had not gone through a course of study preparatory, submitted themselves to examination, and been designated as qualified for the work in some solemn ordination service, never entered into the conception of the founders of the Presbyterian chapels. They knew too well, how important it is to the interests of truth, and to maintaining society at that pitch of intellectual elevation at which it may have arrived, to keep such an office as the ministerial in the hands of men of attainment and some refinement, who can defend the truth, and set their flocks an example of decency in their domestic affairs. If any thing contrary to this has ever made its way in the Presbyterian congregations, it has been in contravention of one of the most cherished principles of their founders. When a suitable course of education was completed, the designation to the ministry was done in a very solemn manner. The previous examinations were severe. The candidate was expected to maintain a given thesis in the Latin language, and to exhibit proof of his acquaintance with the languages in which the Old and New Testaments were written. He was expected to assign sufficient reason for his engaging in the ministry at all, and especially for engaging in it among the Protestant Dissenters. When this was done, there was, for many years, the imposition of hands, by a company of elder ministers assembled for the purpose, in the midst of solemn prayer." Hist. Def. Pp. 11, 12.

§ Ib. p. 42.

ordained the minister of what he calls (but incorrectly) the Presbyterian congregation at Sheffield, "in the Presbyterian manner."\* But he has not seen fit, when speaking of this matter, to state, for the information of his readers, though I will not say that he has, "for a purpose," concealed, the very important fact, that during the period in question, and for many years after, it was the uniform and invariable practice among the Presbyterian Dissenters, to demand a full and formal statement of the doctrinal tenets of all persons offering themselves for ordination.† That fact I now proceed to place beyond the reach of contradiction.

It may first be mentioned, as a material circumstance, that in London, as well as in the country, ministers of the two denominations, during the early part of the last century, united in the performance of this rite, as they certainly did in the metropolis and in all parts of the country, until toward its conclusion. Of this, two remarkable instances occurred in the year 1707, one in London, the other in Cheshire. An extract has already been inserted from the exhortation delivered by Mr. Shower, (an eminent Presbyterian minister, and one of the Salters' Hall lecturers,) at the ordination of Mr. Thomas Bradbury, a well-known and zealous Independent, who had been educated by Mr. Timothy Jollie, which took place July 10th, in that year. The exhortation is published with Mr. Bradbury's Confession of Faith, which is decidedly Trinitarian, and strongly Calvinistic. The following is part of the excellent counsel tendered to the young preacher:—"Approve yourself a lover of *peace* and *unity*; and join with your brethren who would seek peace, and promote it. As ever you expect God's blessing on your ministry, remember this advice; and, whatever self-denial it may cost you, endeavour

\* Hist. Def. p. 76.

† He does indeed, *in another place*, mention *incidentally*, and in support of a different position, that confessions of faith were *made* at ordinations, p. 48.—Mr. Henry states that at the ordination of Mr. Samuel Benyon, at Broad Oak, Jan. 24, 1699, the Moderator, Mr. James Owen, "*demand*ed a confession of his faith and ordination vows, which he made abundantly to our satisfaction;" and Mr. Benyon commenced that confession (which is in print) with these words—"Being *obliged* to confess my faith."—



to follow it. I don't mean the peace and unity of your particular congregation, (though it will much concern you to take care to preserve that,) nor do I intend by it, any churches of such or such a name and denomination among *Protestants*, but of the whole body of *Protestants*, who, under several names and forms, are separated from the church of Rome, on the same common principles of the Reformation. I am glad to see the concurrence of ministers of different denominations in a solemn ordination by *Imposition of Hands*." \*

The other instance occurred a few weeks afterwards, at Dean Row, (near Wimslow,) in Cheshire, which is recorded in the Diary of Matthew Henry. He mentions that Mr. Birch, late pastor of the Nonconformist church at that place, who had been ordained *by the people* twenty years before, not being satisfied with the want of ministerial ordination, procured three or four ministers privately to ordain him with the imposition of hands; and adds, "the moderate of that congregation are contriving to gain that point from the other party." At the annual meeting of ministers, held August 5, he says, "We were fourteen, in peace and love. Mr. Waterhouse preached very well, [from] 2 Cor. v. 20. We had no business at all—no complaint—blessed be God. I was urged by the congregation at Dean Row, to join with Mr. Jollie in ordaining Mr. Hugh Worthington, now come among them, upon the removal of Mr. Birch to Yarmouth."† With this request he complied, as the following extracts will shew:—

"Sept. 1.—Went by appointment to Winslow, willing to become all things to all men, and to spend and be spent, &c.

——— 2.—A solemn fast in the congregation at Dean Row, for the ordination of Mr. Hugh Worthington, whom they have chosen to be their pastor in the room of Mr. Birch. I preached [from] 2 Cor. v. 18. Mr. Angier prayed over him. Mr. Jolly, of Sheffield, gave the exhor-

\* P. 46. The passage quoted at p. 169 ante, immediately follows this sentence.

† I have lately been informed by a correspondent well acquainted with the state of Dissenters in Cheshire, that the congregation meeting in the old chapel at Dean Row, (built, it appears, for the use of a church formed on the strict Independent model,) which has been, for several years past, Unitarian, has nearly become extinct, no regular worship being now carried on by the minister.

tation, from Matt. xxviii. 20. We were much refreshed with mutual love, which is as the holy anointing oil.

——— 3. Mr. Jolly is of a healing, loving spirit.”\*

Thus it appears, that, in 1707, the two denominations were in a state of harmony and alliance; their ministers then uniting in the performance of a solemn ecclesiastical service.

Reference has already been made to the denial, in direct terms, by the writer who speaks in the name of the English Presbyterian Association, of a notorious and indisputable fact, with which they will scarcely obtain credit for involuntary ignorance. Before proceeding to substantiate this charge, I will put the reader in possession of their repeated allegations. They describe the body to which Peirce, Benson, and other eminent Arian ministers of the *last century*, belonged, as a body “which *required no confession of faith*, and maintained none as the symbol of congregational union;”† and affirm, that, from the original settlement of their congregations, shortly after the Revolution, the Presbyterian founders not only imposed no creed, and required no subscription to articles, but adopted no other means to restrain or hinder the departure of their successors in any direction, and to any extent, from what they regarded as doctrinal truth; or, in other words, from those views of the Gospel which they considered to be agreeable to scripture, and regarded as of the highest importance, on account of their being replete with sanctifying influence and practical effect on the character and conduct. “Had the founders been attached to their own sentiments so strongly, that deviation from them would, by them, have been treated as objectionable, how happens it that no expression denoting such feeling is to be found in their trust-deeds? How is it that their congregational acts did not assist or promote it? The Independents did not thus act. Religious belief is, on the admission of their ministers, distinctly stated. By practice, the members of their congregations are called upon to make confessions of faith, and to express a determination to adhere to them. The difference in the whole course and practice

\* MS. Copy of Orig. Diary, by Dr. Williams, and his edit. of Life, pp. 145, 149.

† Hist. pp. 27, 28.

of the two parties indicates a distinguishing principle. There was nothing to prevent the limitations required by the one from being required by the other, or the confessions of doctrines demanded by the one from being demanded by the other.\* “The value the Presbyterians attach to the ceremony [ordination] may not be great; and it has always been of less importance to them than to the Independents, because the former do not, like the latter, make it a contract, a declaration by the minister of his faith, a pledge as to the doctrines he is chosen to preach.”†

The last extract contains an accurate description of the views entertained by the Presbyterians during the period in question. Considering “soundness in the faith” as one of the essential qualifications of a minister of the Gospel, previously to their admitting a person, who had received a suitable education for the ministry, into that office, they demanded from him a public confession of his faith, which if it were esteemed orthodox, was accounted a valid and satisfactory “pledge as to the doctrines he was chosen to preach,” and the act of ordination followed. The whole service, they evidently regarded, on the part at least of the individual to be ordained, in the light of a solemn contract; and so, for many years afterwards, it was generally regarded by their successors. Mr. Hunter, who tells us that “the Independents adhere ostensibly to similar views, as to discipline and the propriety of subscriptions and confessions now, as during the period in question,” asks—“Would the Independent ministers now admit as fellow-ministers, and share in the ordination of persons who should hesitate, at the time of their ordination, to give a pledge of belief in the doctrine of the Trinity?”‡ I answer, Certainly not; and equally certain is it that neither formerly would the Presbyterian ministers.

Of the formal and explicit confessions of faith delivered on these occasions, many were afterwards printed, and copies of a considerable number are in my possession. I am confident that not one can be produced of those belonging

\* Hist. p. 50.

† Ib. p. 21.

‡ Hist. Def. p. 45.

to the period in question, and, I might add, for several years after, which is not decidedly orthodox, understanding by that term either strongly (as in some cases) or moderately Calvinistic, and unequivocally Trinitarian. Abundance of extracts might be produced in proof of this assertion, were it necessary. But if any one can be found, not answering to this description, let it be produced.

Dr. Toulmin, a liberal and candid Unitarian, has, in his *Historical View*, furnished decisive testimony to the fact, that a sound and orthodox judgment was deemed one of the requisite qualifications of a minister among the Presbyterians, by inserting copies of "the written certificate formerly given to the candidate," who thereupon, as Mr. Hunter states, "went forth an accredited minister of the Presbyterian denomination." That signed at the ordination of one of the early pastors of a (now) Unitarian congregation at Birmingham, will serve as a specimen of the manner in which these documents were drawn up:—

"Forasmuch as Mr. Thomas Pickard, of Birmingham, in the parish of Birmingham, in the county of Warwick, hath earnestly desired to enter orderly, according to the rules of the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, into the sacred office and function of the ministry; and having requested us, whose names are under-written, solemnly to invest him with ministerial authority; and knowing him to be a man sound and orthodox in his judgment, of a pious and unblameable conversation, and competently qualified with ministerial abilities, (no exception being made against his ordination or admission:) We have approved him, and have proceeded solemnly to set him apart to the office of preaching presbyter, and all the parts and duties belonging to it, with fasting and prayer, and imposition of hands; and do, so far as concerneth us, empower him to perform all the offices and duties of a faithful minister of Jesus Christ. In witness whereof we have hereunto put our hands, the 19th day of September, 1705."\*

[The names of three ejected Ministers are subscribed.]

This document shews the light in which ordination was then regarded by the Presbyterians; and though Dr. Toulmin says "the authoritative tone" had been "lowered," since the time

\* Pp. 275, 276. A certificate to precisely the same effect, and nearly in the same words, may be seen at p. 230, dated August 21, 1702, signed at the ordination of Mr. William Woodhouse, (ancestor of the late venerable Archdeacon Woodhouse,) at Rearsby, in Leicestershire.

of the Commonwealth, it appears to me that a power to confer an official character was assumed by the parties who signed it. The reader, however, may form his own judgment from the tenor of the instrument itself.

We have a particular account of the prevailing method of conducting these services in connection with a Sermon by Mr. Jeremiah Smith, (of Silver-street,) delivered at the ordination of Mr. Samuel Clark,\* at St. Alban's, Sept. 17, 1712, in which the two most eminent Presbyterian divines of that time, Doctor Williams and Mr. Matthew Henry were prominently engaged. The pamphlet is introduced by "a Preface, shewing the solemnity of Presbyterian ordinations," by Dr. Williams, from which the following are extracts:—

"They who are most zealous for the ceremonies of the Established Church call most of the Dissenters *Presbyterians*; whereas at the same time, several parties among Dissenters oppose and brand those as Presbyterians, to whom that name is most proper, on account of their different principles and practices in sundry points, and particularly in what concerns the ministerial office and Ordination. It will be no just cause of offence to either side, that I give a narrative how we *Presbyterians* admit and ordain men to the order of Presbyters.

"Several among us (notwithstanding past discouragements) being desirous to subserve the interest of the Christian religion, have designed one or more of their most hopeful sons to be preachers of the EVERLASTING Gospel. To effect which good purpose, they carefully seek and choose what they esteem the best and safest helps, for their education in all such learning as tends to qualify them for that sacred office. The course of their studies being finished, and their behaviour promising, they are, at a fit age, presented before such of our pastors as are appointed to examine candidates for the ministry.

"These ministers give the proposed person some controverted theological question in Latin, upon which he frames an Exegesis; this he delivers, and sustains the Orthodox side of the question in the same language against all opponents.

"[Afterwards] he is strictly examined as to his skill in the Greek and Hebrew text of Scripture, and also in philosophy and scripture chronology; and all present are at liberty to propose such questions as they think fit, concerning any difficult texts of scripture, and any points in Doctrinal and Casuistical Divinity: to all which questions he is obliged to answer.

\* Afterwards D. D., the paternal friend and generous patron of Doddridge, during the early years of his ministry.

“After which examination, he is desired to withdraw; and the judgment of the ministers concerning his seriousness, and the sufficiency of all his performances, is asked. If they declare a full satisfaction, then upon sufficient testimonials of his sober and godly conversation, he is licensed to preach as a probationer for some time.

“The day of ordination is observed as a Fast. The ordainers are senior pastors, who were ordained Presbyters.

“One of them preacheth a sermon relating to the ministerial office; as to its institution, duties, and privileges. Then one of the most aged pastors, with great seriousness, appoints the Candidate to make a public Confession of his Faith, which he performs, (having composed it himself beforehand.) If this be esteemed Orthodox, the pastor proceeds to ask him what are the governing and principal ends for which he desireth this Order? Then he proposeth the more essential duties incumbent on a Gospel minister, and demands his Promise to perform each of them. This he *engageth* with the greatest solemnity.”

The Questions proposed by Dr. Williams are introduced by a Preface, evidently written by the Dr. himself. It contains so much important matter, that I shall insert the greater part of it.

The custom among the DISSENTERS, of delivering a Confession of their Faith at their Ordination (of which several have been printed), tho’ not generally used by other Churches, yet is certainly very proper and useful upon such occasions: since it not only gives a more satisfactory evidence of the person’s acquaintance with and assenting to the truths of the Gospel, than barely to subscribe any imposed form; but also by this it may effectually appear, what an Agreement there is in the great Doctrines of the Gospel, both among themselves, and with the Scripture, the Doctrine of the Church of England, and other Reformed Churches. And whatever variety or difference may be in smaller matters, in method, manner of thinking, or speaking, it is so far from breeding confusion, that it rather sets off that Unity of Faith, and harmony of sentiments, which appear in all material points; and is an instance of that true freedom of thought, under the conduct of the Scripture, which the DISSENTERS stand up for, as the privilege of every man. And agreeable to their’s was the practice of the most ancient Fathers. The several short Confessions of Faith we meet with in their writings, are very different both in method and expression, though agreeing in the substance. And how much more reasonable and just is it, that every one should have the liberty of delivering their own sense of the Doctrines of the Scripture in their own words, than to be tied down to the arbitrary invented expressions of others; as if all men’s minds were of the same make, or one coat

would fit all shapes and sizes! And yet 'tis this Imposition of unscriptural forms of words in matters of Faith, that has constantly disturbed the Church, ever since the three first and purest ages of Christianity. This has been always one great engine of division, and in many respects very prejudicial to the Church. How often has it been deprived thereby of the labours of the most valuable persons, who tho' not disagreeing in any thing material from their neighbours, yet could not frame to pronounce right their *shibboleth*? But it would carry me too far, to take notice of the several mischiefs of these impositions. The method, then, taken among us, is certainly much more for the interest of the Church of Christ, than to cramp men with any particular form, by whomsoever invented. As for the Questions solemnly proposed at our ordinations, the reason of them is plain from the nature of the thing, and the practice of other Churches is agreeable thereto."

This preface is remarkably illustrative both of the liberty allowed by Presbyterians, in reference to modes of expression, and of the zeal manifested by them for those great doctrines which constitute the substance of Christian truth.

The following is the first Question proposed :—

"That one who desires to be a minister be sound in the Faith, is principally to be regarded, because this is what you are appointed to preach. That you also firmly assent to the Doctrines of the Gospel, and unfeignedly believe in the Lord Jesus, is not only necessary to your own salvation, but to render you also more fitted to benefit others by your ministry. I therefore desire you to confess, as in the sight of God, what that Faith is which you truly Believe yourself, and solemnly engage to Preach to others."

The clause in the Confession of Faith, delivered in answer to this question, which relates to the doctrine of the Trinity, is expressed in these words :—

"I FIRMLY BELIEVE,\* tho' I cannot fathom, what the Scripture has revealed concerning the Father, Son, and Blessed Spirit, when it attributes equally to each of them, Eternity and all other Divine Perfections and Titles; ascribes to them the same almighty works; and claims for them the same homage and subjection of the creature; yet so as not to destroy the Unity of the Godhead, nor confound the Persons one with the other, but distinguishing them by their personal properties, and more plainly by the different parts they act in the œconomy of man's redemption."

\* It is worthy of notice, that this expression occurs in no other place through the whole Confession, the phrase being elsewhere merely "*I believe*," which is repeated about twenty times.

Question 6 is as follows:—

“The Devil is active to influence seducers, and by them to turn men from the Truth to error and delusions. Ministers are, by their office, set for the defence of the Gospel, and under special obligations to contend earnestly for the Faith, and oppose gainsayers with meekness of wisdom. Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the Truth of the Gospel?

*Answer.* I desire to entertain a very great regard to, and veneration for, all the truths of the Gospel; to give them the freest admittance into my own mind, and to endeavour to propagate them to others. I resolve to set myself vigorously to oppose the spreading of errors, especially those that strike at the Fundamentals of Christianity; yet in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth.”

Mr. Henry, in the Exhortation delivered on this occasion, mentions, among those that *contradict* the Great Truths of Christianity, “those that deny the Trinity, the Godhead of Christ, and his Satisfaction,” whom he associates with “those that question the Being of a God.”

In a sermon preached at the ordination of Mr. B. A. Atkinson, in London, January 7, 1712-13, the same excellent man says: “The Three Persons in the blessed Trinity gloriously concur as in the *creating* of man, so in the *redeeming* and *governing* of man, and particularly in sending messengers to the children of men, to bring them revelations of the will of God. Ministers are *ordained* in the same Name into which Christians are baptized *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*; Matt. xxviii. 19. Nor could they baptize in that name, if they were not commissioned by the authority, and devoted to the glory of that Name.” He afterwards, in allusion to those words in the text, (Is. vi. 8,) *who will go for us?* describes a Christian minister as “an agent for God *the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, employed for God the Father, to bring the souls to him he has made, as their chief good and highest end; for God the Son to bring the souls to him he has redeemed, as their prophet, priest, and king; for God the Holy Ghost to bring the souls he has the charge of, under his conduct, and his sanctifying power and influence.”\*

\* Pp. 11, 27. Mr. Atkinson, in his Confession of Faith, thus declares his belief in the Trinity—“I believe in the Unity of the Godhead, there are *Three Persons*



Although the evidence already produced on this point will probably be considered as complete, I cannot forbear subjoining the testimony of Dr. Calamy. In a Letter to a Divine in Germany, giving a brief but true account of the Protestant Dissenters in England, annexed to a sermon preached by him at the ordination of [Dr.] Samuel Chandler, and several others, on January 19, 1716-17, he says,

“ They are denied the advantage of educating their youth, either at Oxford or Cambridge, by oaths and subscriptions that are imposed ; and therefore, besides private seminaries, where philosophical and theological lectures are read, they send their children to North Britain and Holland for academical education.

“ They are zealous for a learned ministry ; and therefore, after several years spent in preparatory studies, young men are carefully examined amongst them, before they are allowed to enter upon preaching in public : and upon their being in time called to take the pastoral charge of any Christian society, or after they have continued so long Candidates as to have evidence of the acceptableness of their gifts, and to be able with freedom to make choice of the ministry for the employment of their lives, they are solemnly ordained, by fasting and prayer, and imposition of hands, after making a public Confession of that Faith in which they engage to make it their Business to instruct others. And this Examination and Ordination is managed according to the Rules laid down in the Directory published by the Westminster Assembly, about the year 1644, which also gives direction about the several parts of public worship which are generally approved among us.”\*

The following extract is from an elaborate tract, by the learned Dr. Chandler, published in 1748, entitled, “ The Case of Subscription to explanatory Articles of Faith, as a Qualification for Admission into the Christian Ministry, calmly and

that are distinguished one from the other in their ways of subsisting, yet equally enjoying and possessing all the essential Attributes and Perfections of the Deity, as immensity, eternity, infinity, immutability, omniscience, and omnipresence.” In proof of this doctrine, he thus refers to the baptismal formula :—“ Persons are commanded to be baptized in the Name of this sacred Trinity, whereby it appears that the very same Worship which is due to the Father, is to be paid unto the Son and the Spirit, which could not be, if they were not the *most high God*, in the same Essence with the Father ; and though this is a mystery above my comprehension, yet I believe it on the word of that God that cannot lie.” p. 33.

\* See Neal's Hist. of Puritans, vol. iii. Appendix, pp. 602—605.

impartially reviewed," &c. as it will shew, that while the practice continued among the Presbyterians, till that time, of requiring confessions of faith previously to ordination, they distinguished between subscription to human creeds or articles, and a confession by the party himself, in his own words :

" Mr. Bingham tells us, that the fourth Council of Carthage, that met A.C. 398, prescribes a particular form of Examination, by way of interrogatories, to the bishop that was to be ordained. What then? How doth this prove that they made use of *this very method of Subscription*, as he undertook to prove? Why, *examination by interrogatories is, with every honest man, equivalent with subscription*. Suppose it is, doth every honest man, that honestly answers a question, subscribe to it? We did not want to be informed that the primitive Church examined the candidates for the ministry, but that they forced them to subscribe to some explanatory articles or creed. But there is not a word of this in the canons of the Council of Carthage. And suppose there was, doth he think we will take the Council of Carthage, held at the close of the fourth century, for the primitive Church? And doth he not know, that there is even some question as to the truth and authenticity of these very canons? Whether he did or did not know it, why did he quote them upon us as authorities? The other authority is from an edict of Justinian, who lived so low down as the sixth century. And what doth he say? Why, that he who ordains a bishop shall demand from the person to be ordained, a libel, subscribed by himself, containing a Confession of the Orthodox Faith; *i. e.* the person to be ordained shall make *his own confession*, and subscribe it. But what hath this to do with the modern method, of making the person to be ordained to subscribe a creed ready drawn up to his hand by others, and which he had no share himself in making of? This was what he should have proved, in order to justify the practice of subscription in the Church of England. Justinian's Novel is rather a justification of the manner of Ordination amongst the Dissenters, who don't impose their own Confessions on the persons to be ordained, but desire them either to give in their own Confession in writing, or to read it publicly in the congregation before whom they are to be ordained. Thanks to the gentleman for this kind testimony in proof of the antiquity of our Method of Ordination. What now is become of this same practice of the primitive Church? Of his two proofs, one is not earlier than the fourth century, and that says not a word about Subscription; and the other is fetched out of the sixth century, and vindicates, not the practice of the Church's method of Subscription, but the more just and equitable one made use of by Dissenters in the manner of their Ordinations."—Pp. 78, 79.

One exception to this practice occurred in 1740, when Mr. Caleb Fleming was ordained without a confession of faith. This is mentioned by Mr. Walter Wilson as a "remarkable circumstance," and as "probably the first instance of an omission of the kind that ever occurred at a Dissenting ordination. The only declaration that he used was, that 'he believed the New Testament writings to contain a revelation worthy of God to give, and of man to receive; and that it should be his endeavour to recommend these teachings to the people, in the sense in which he could from time to time understand them.'"<sup>\*</sup>

Of the six ministers engaged in this ordination, (Drs. Chandler, Hunt, and Benson, Messrs. Mole, Simmons, and Sandercock,) two, if not three, were at that time pastors of Independent churches.

Here we certainly have a deviation from the ordinary mode. The custom of requiring confessions of faith at ordinations, continued, however, in general use among the Presbyterians at least as late as 1778; and although the avowal of orthodox doctrine in some published Confessions of later date is neither so full nor so explicit as in those of earlier times, no instance, I believe, can be produced of Anti-Trinitarian, or even Pelagian doctrine, being professed on these occasions.

The reader, after perusing these extracts, will be prepared to judge of the following statements made by a writer who is endeavouring to prove the essential distinction between Presbyterians and Independents; "The laxity, so far as it exists in practice, as to ordination, may be fairly traced to an essential difference between the plan and object of the ordinance, as practised by the two bodies; and, therefore, so far from the result identifying one body with the other, it only marks their separation. The Independents have, I believe, always made the ordination an occasion for requiring and recording the creed or confession of the minister, and it therefore serves what is, in their view, an important practical purpose. The Presbyterians have not only omitted this test or inquiry, but constantly made it their distinctive boast that they did so. From neither minister nor

<sup>\*</sup> History of Dissenting Churches, Vol. III. p. 384.

people has creed, confession, or experience been required. What, according to the view of the other body, must be an important practical object in the ordinance, was therefore entirely wanting upon Presbyterian principles.”\*

The ordination services, as practised by the English Presbyterians for a long succession of years, have, within the last half century, been generally discontinued by their Unitarian successors. The English Presbyterian Association, while they admit that the old form of ordination has “fallen into partial disuse,” assure us that a ceremony now called “settling,” “equivalent in many respects,” is still frequent;† but, from their own description, it appears to differ widely from the original rite. Mr. Hunter states, that “the ordinations have almost dwindled down into a short service of exhortation and prayer, at the close of the student’s academical course.”‡ Another recent writer asserts, that “the ceremony of ordination contained a declaration of faith, at first of some strictness, but continually becoming more relaxed, till at present reduced to little more than a simple avowal of belief in the religion of Christ.”§ Alas, that the body who gloried in their firm and stedfast adherence to the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ—the Gospel of God our Saviour—should have been succeeded by men who merely require from the occupants of their pulpits a general declaration of belief in the divine origin and authority of the Christian religion, as a matter of external revelation!

Concerning the view taken by modern Unitarians of the rite of ordination, we have a competent and unexceptionable witness, in their champion and chieftain, the celebrated Dr. Joseph Priestley.

In the preface to a Sermon, entitled, “A View of Revealed Religion,” preached by him at the ordination of the Rev. William Field, of Warwick, July 12, 1790, published with a

\* A Plain Statement of the Trusts and Recent Administration of Lady Hewley’s Charities, &c., by Thomas William Tottie, 1834, p. 43.

† Hist. p. 34.      ‡ Hist. Def. p. 12.

§ Observations on the Title of Unitarians and other English Presbyterians, to administer or partake in the benefit of English Presbyterian and General Protestant Dissenters’ Trusts. 1834. p. 11.

Charge, delivered at the same time, by the late Mr. Belsham, he undertakes to explain "the idea of *ordination* that prevails among Dissenters." He gives the following account—

"We (at least many of us) do not now mean by it the *giving of orders*, without which a person could not be considered as properly qualified to exercise the office of minister in a Christian society. As all our societies are independent of each other, the members of each of them are, of course, the sole judges of the qualifications of the person whom they chuse to be their minister. Consequently their appointment is his proper *orders* or *title to officiate* among them; and all that is done by the ministers who bear any part in what is usually called *the ordination service*, (besides thereby virtually expressing their approbation of the choice of the congregation, and giving their minister the right hand of fellowship,) is to recommend him and his labours to the divine blessing by prayer, and to give him and the people proper advice.\*

"On this idea, it is now customary with many Dissenters, especially those who are called Presbyterians, for the minister to discharge all

\* This was precisely the view taken by the earlier and more rigid Independents. Indeed, it is a fact not a little remarkable, that while the modern Congregational Dissenters agree with the moderate Presbyterians of the period in question, the Unitarian successors of the latter hold, on the subject of ordination, the opinions entertained, and practise (if any) the mode adopted, by the strict Independents of the seventeenth century.

The reader may compare with the above the language of high-church writers in the reign of George the First, concerning the Presbyterians at that time, who were strongly opposed to all preaching by laymen, and to any person's administering either of the sacraments, or stately exercising the ministerial office, without being solemnly ordained by presbyters.

"That the generality of the *Dissenters* do utterly condemn *lay baptism*, is known to every body. And that those *Independent*, but more especially those *Anabaptist teachers*, who pretend to no other *orders* than that of getting a congregation to join with them, are *mere* laymen, ever *was* and ever must be acknowledged by all that hold the *Presbyterian principles*, and indeed by all others that own *any orders* at all."—A Defence of the Reply to the Caveat, &c. by Benjamin Reed, Exon. 1715. Postscript.

"Mr. Peirce, I acknowledge, is as capable as any of his brethren to make a specious harangue for any sort of Ordination; and before I saw this Sermon, I thought he had been more of an Independent than a Presbyterian; I shall not, therefore, call upon him to reconcile his useful Ordination Sermon with this of Presbyterian ordination, which he now calls, '*that solemn Ordination without which*,' says he, '*I should not dare to act as a minister myself*;' because I am surprised that a man of his learning *dare act* with it.'"—The Invalidity of the Dissenting Ministry, by a Presbyter of the Church of England. 1717. p. 3.

the functions of his office, baptizing and administering the Lord's-supper, as well as preaching and praying before ordination, in order more effectually to remove the prejudices which still remain with many, founded on the idea that some powers are conferred on this occasion, powers which qualify him to do *after* this ceremony what he could not do *before*.

"The proper ordination service, therefore, consists in the *prayer over the candidate*, and the *charge*. But the congregation, and also many strangers, being usually assembled on the occasion, and especially a number of ministers being present, it has been usual for one of them to deliver a discourse or *sermon* on some subject relating to Christianity in general, or the ministry of it in particular."

He next informs the reader, that "instead of the particular *Confession of Faith*, which was formerly required of all candidates for the ministry, (his soundness in which was then deemed essential,) certain *questions* are put to him, which lead him to give as much as he thinks proper of his views of Christianity and the ministry of it, and the motives and maxims of his own conduct, for the instruction of the audience." He then refers to "the ceremony of *imposition of hands*, which in primitive times accompanied the action of praying for a particular person, by which the apostles communicated spiritual gifts, and which was afterwards supposed to be necessary to the conferring of proper qualifications for the gospel ministry." This, he says, "is now generally laid aside by us, since we are conscious that we have nothing to impart, and wish not to encourage superstition." After stating, that "ordination being now no longer considered in the light of *conferring orders*, as in Episcopal, and the proper Presbyterian churches, many of the more liberal Dissenters neglect it altogether,"—he concludes by "expressing his wish, that some service to which the name of *ordination* may well enough be given, may be kept up among us, at the same time that every precaution is taken to prevent superstition with respect to it." In that case, the name ordination would, as he had just before stated, "no longer suggest the idea that was formerly annexed to it." Whether the practice can be justified, of retaining a name, to which a specific and definite meaning has by long prescription been attached, after the

idea properly denoted by it has been abandoned, I do not now inquire. It seems, however, adapted, if not intended, to mislead. The modern Unitarians have abandoned both name and thing.\* The practice called *placing* or *settlement*, mentioned by Mr. Tottie,† is a different kind of service, and though it may bear a slight resemblance to what the old Presbyterians understood by ordination, it corresponds in fact to the idea of that rite, which Dr. Priestley has described in the above extract, not to that which he mentions as formerly held by Dissenters, especially Presbyterians, and which all modern Unitarians have entirely discarded. Mr. Hunter admits, that “of late years they have not been very choice in their admissions to the ministry.”‡ They certainly do not, like their Presbyterian forefathers, invariably expect and require “their ministers to be educated and set apart for their office; to be learned, not laymen; or to undergo ordination derived through presbyters and from other ministers.”§ At all events, they have long since ceased to demand the particular Confession

\* Mr. Daniel Mayo, a Presbyterian minister, published in 1706, (12mo.) a sermon, preached at Chertsey, in October of the preceding year, entitled, “The Necessity of a Regular Mission to the Ministry asserted and proved.” Another Presbyterian minister, Mr. James Waters, of Uxbridge, wrote a preface, in which he speaks of the violence and fury with which a regular admission into the sacred ministry had been attacked by men of different principles. After referring to the intrusion of men destitute of the requisite qualifications, into an office to which they were never *called*, he adds—“This pernicious practice has not only been patronized by those who are tainted with the vile principles of the *Socinians*, but by many who have sucked in the silly tenets of the *Antinomians*.” Speaking of the sermon itself, he says, “I hope that as the author has solidly and judiciously exposed the *sinfulness* and great mischiefs of such irregular principles, so it may (by God’s blessing) be effectual to open the eyes of many, who have been too indifferent about the *commission* of those to whom they commit the conduct of their souls. Besides, it may serve to stop the mouths of such uncharitable clergymen as Mr. D——, (a) and others of the same spiteful temper, who unfairly charge the main *body* of Protestant Dissenters with the disorders of a *few*, who are unjustly ranked amongst us, and whose principles we as much detest as the most zealous among themselves.” He undertakes to prove that ministerial ordination is requisite before any man ought to preach publicly and constantly, and that it should be performed with fasting and prayer, and imposition of hands, which last, he says, “might be shewn to have been the constant practice of the Church,” and

(a) Rev. Theophilus Dorrington, See p. 130, ante.

† Plain Statement, &c. p. 42.

‡ Hist. Def. p. 55. § Observations on the Title, &c. p. 11.

formerly regarded as at once the proof and the pledge of that "soundness in the faith," which Dr. Priestley acknowledges was then DEEMED ESSENTIAL. That practice, at least, they universally disown and reject. Their "liberty of private inquiry and judgment," to use Mr. Cooper's language, "is unimpeded by any such confession of faith."\*

adds, "I think 'tis very faulty to omit the use thereof, though I dare not say the ordination is a nullity where this is wanting, especially where the lawfulness is doubted," pp. 34, 35. Speaking of probationers for the ministry, he says, "I think care should be taken that none preach, even as candidates, without some previous examination and allowance, nor be suffered to continue too long without ordination; and also that some distinction should be made between these and such as are ordained." p. 38.

There might be some difference of opinion among the Presbyterians of the period in question, as to the nature of ordination, and the kind or degree of authority thereby conferred; but Peirce, the <sup>reputed</sup> learned Arian, was a strenuous advocate for "the proper Presbyterian idea." He also approved of requiring confessions of faith on the occasion. In his sermon, entitled "Presbyterian Ordination proved regular, (1716,) he considers the words, 1 Tim. vi. 12. "*hast professed a good profession before many witnesses*," as referring to the profession made by Timothy, either at his baptism or at his ordination, more probably at the latter, "since 'tis more likely the apostle was present at his ordination than his baptism." He adds, "I the rather mention this, that you may see how very probable 'tis, the apostles used pretty much the same method we do. However, 'tis not bare probabilities we ground our practice upon; but somewhat of this nature is requisite, in order to our trying and forming a judgment concerning persons, when we commit the office to them." He proceeds to explain the import of the expression, *commit thou these things*, which, he says, imports, 1. An authorizing and empowering persons, as ministers of the gospel, to teach these things, or the giving them a warrant to do so. 2. A laying it upon them as a solemn charge and trust, a binding and engaging them to teach these things. So that the very committing the things to them makes a great alteration in their circumstances, and leaves them under a strict obligation to do the work, as ever they would approve themselves faithful to God, and true to the vows and promises they made.—Fifteen Sermons, pp. 86, 87.

\* Substance of Speech, p. 24.



SENTIMENTS WITH WHICH ANTITRINITARIAN OPINIONS WERE REGARDED BY PRESBYTERIAN MINISTERS—MR. EMLYN DISOWNED BY THEM—SOCINIAN TENETS DENOUNCED AS ANTICHRISTIAN—THEIR ABETTORS CHARGED WITH BLASPHEMY, AND STIGMATIZED AS INFIDELS—LADY HEWLEY AND THE TRUSTS FOUNDED BY HER—SALTERS' HALL DEBATE.

THE fact that Antitrinitarian and other kindred opinions were divulged in England during the era of the Presbyterian founders, has an important bearing on this inquiry, as it furnishes the means of ascertaining the sentiments with which those opinions and their advocates were regarded by the leading Presbyterian divines of that era.

When Dr. Williams ~~and~~ his Presbyterian brethren were accused, not of maintaining the peculiar tenets of Socinus, but merely of holding some opinions on the mode of justification, in which the keen penetration of a bitter opponent, eager to detect erroneous doctrine, pretended to discover remote and latent tendencies to that dangerous and fatal system—a system which, though far from proceeding in the career of aberration from orthodoxy to the length of modern Unitarianism, was then accounted the worst and most pestilent of heresies—the name of its founder being itself the type and symbol of all that was malignant and virulent in doctrinal pravity;—in what manner did they repel the charge? Did they exhibit nothing like indignation? did they manifest no emotion of becoming resentment or just offence? In repudiating the imputation of their principal opponent, that they “held soul-destroying errors,” Dr. Williams says, “Mr. Mather’s criminations of his brethren are intolerable . . . More wicked malice and falsehood, hardly any man can be guilty of . . . Nay, his malignant spirit riseth so high, as to call them oft *semi-Socinians*, and he studiously brands them with that name, as well as with that of *Socinians*; and adds, that the Gospel of our salvation is craftily and insolently assaulted by them in the very vitals and fundamentals of it.”\* Speaking of the

\* Dr. Williams’s Works, Vol. v. pp. 268, 269.

“nickname” the “scandalous word,” fastened upon them by this “fiery man,” they say—“He quits all truth and modesty, in giving us the name of *Socinians* or semi-Socinians. He saith, our opinions are the offspring of *Socinianism*: but what meaneth he by offspring? Is it only, 1, That Socinianism was the occasion thereof; or, 2, That they are of the same genuine nature with *Socinianism*? The last is an abominable slander, hatch’d by no good spirit. 1. The former may be pretended, but then an *immediate* descent must be denied. *Socinianism* tempted weak men to the opposite extreme of profane *Antinomianism*. This extreme was perceived equally fatal to the Vitals of practical Christianity as *Socinianism*; and also to give advantage to the *Socinians*, by its wild positions and weak arguments consonant thereto.... 2. Our principles are far from being the offspring of Socinianism, as being of the *same nature with it*, which he meaneth. They are nothing which is properly *Socinian*, or condemned as such, either by Synod or by men of learning. So far are we from being *half-Socinians*. The *Socinian* principles are summarily reduced to that of the *Trinity*, and that of *Christ’s Satisfaction*. They deny the *Deity* of Christ, as the Son of God by *eternal* generation; we affirm it. They deny the *Personality* of the *Holy Ghost*; we affirm it. The malice of our author cannot pretend to touch us there. The *Socinians* deny that Christ died a *proper Sacrifice* for sin; we affirm it. They deny that Christ’s sufferings were the punishment of our sins; we affirm it. They deny that Christ *satisfied* divine justice, or died *in our place*; we affirm he *satisfied* justice, and that Christ died in our *place*, and in our *stead*; he died, that we might not die, who were liable to die; he gave his life for ours,”\* &c. They afterwards retort Mr. Mather’s charge of holding opinions by which the Socinian cause, in reference to the Eternal Deity and proper Satisfaction of Christ, was favoured and supported.

But in what manner did the Presbyterians feel and act toward those who attempted to propagate doctrines thus indignantly disavowed and severely denounced? “The Pres-

\* Dr. Williams’s Works, vol. v. pp. 270, 271.

byterian (we are told) has never looked with *disfavour* upon those who differed from him." "No barrier against the manifest heresy was raised, no protection was framed to exclude the offensive creed, and no separation was attempted from those who publicly and openly were known to advance the criminal doctrines." This had been a sufficient demand upon the credulity of the most uninformed reader. The English Presbyterian Association, however, as if desirous of shewing "to what lengths assurance may be carried in the way of assertion," venture moreover to affirm, that the ministry of those who propagated such manifestly heretical, offensive, and criminal doctrines, was *approved* and *encouraged*. "Were the guilty parties pointed out for rebuke? They were eminent, and learned, and pious, and their ministry was encouraged."\*

The Presbyterian churches of England retained for several years after the period in question, (with a few individual exceptions,) that firm adherence and steadfast attachment to the orthodox faith concerning the Trinity, redemption by the Son of God, and sanctification by the Holy Spirit, which distinguished their venerable founders and most eminent early ministers. Their Divine Master had, indeed, something to allege "against them." Toward the close of the period now under review, the ardour of their love to his person and his cause had undergone abatement, the fervour of their zeal in vindication and defence of the peculiar doctrines of his gospel had suffered considerable declension, but they had not yet forsaken the faith of his first disciples and of their own forefathers, in his proper essential Deity, or the vicarious nature, expiatory character, and peculiar design of his sufferings and death. They could not, in this respect, "bear those that were evil;" and, instead of acknowledging as ministers of the gospel, rejected as "evil men and seducers," those who denied any one of the great vital truths of genuine Christianity.

\* Hist. p. 51. The writer professes to be speaking of Presbyterian *foundations*, or the original trusts created for preaching and carrying on public worship, chiefly during the reign of William and Mary, and the earlier years of that of Queen Anne.

Preachers of Anti-Trinitarian doctrine were unknown in England during the period in question. There was, however, in the early part of the last century, a Presbyterian minister (Mr. Thomas Emlyn,)\* who, having been educated, in part, at the academy kept by Mr. Doolittle, near London, settled in Dublin, and, after having preached there several years with much acceptance, was abruptly dismissed by the ministers of that city, on its being discovered that he was not “a believer in the supreme deity of Jesus Christ.” His denial of the doctrine of the Trinity had rendered him “obnoxious” and “offensive” to the other Presbyterian ministers of Dublin, most of whom acted toward him in a very harsh and unbrotherly manner. He was, at the instigation of some “zealous Dissenters,”—particularly two, “one a *Presbyterian* and the other a *Baptist* church officer”†—indicted, in 1703, for blasphemy; and although that alleged offence was not proved against him by sufficient legal evidence, was found guilty, and sentenced to severe and ignominious punishment. Far be it from me to become the advocate or apologist for the civil prosecution of the propagators of erroneous doctrine, even on the most vital points of our holy religion. As a firm believer, not only in the external revelation of Christianity, but in what are generally considered, and what I sincerely regard, as its great leading truths, I always feel disposed to exclaim, in reference to such proceedings—

“Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis”——

The divine Founder of Christianity, the sole Head, Law-giver, and King of that spiritual community, *his* Church, has, I apprehend, determined this question, by a distinct interposition of his supreme authority. He has himself described the real nature of his own kingdom, and explained the proper manner in which the administration of its subordinate government should be conducted. His own solemn and reiterated announcement, made at a time and under circumstances of

\* Mr. Emlyn, it appears, was not a real Presbyterian, for he asks, “who ever heard, in the primitive church, of such a strange creature as a presbytery made up of the presbyters of several different churches?”—Narrative, p. 20.

† Narrative prefixed to Collection of Tracts, p. 23. 8vo. 1719.

peculiar interest, is, in my view, decisive—"Put up thy sword into the sheath." "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom *were of this world, then* would my servants *fight*; but now is my kingdom not from hence."\* To the same effect is the declaration of his inspired apostle, concerning himself and his apostolical brethren—"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God."† Happy will be the day, speedily may it arrive, when the whole Christian church shall act in the spirit of these Divine Oracles, and disarm infidelity (already vanquished in argument) of its only remaining weapon, by ceasing to employ *force* for the support and propagation of a religion, whose pervading genius and animating soul is love. Then will Christianity, relying on the single arm of her almighty defender, by means of one united effort of prayers, labours, and free contributions for her diffusion, *run, and be glorified*. She will rise from the dust, shake off those earthly adhesions and secular encumbrances which now obstruct her progress; extend her blessings like the light of heaven, and march forward on her destined career of triumph through the earth. Rival parties and mutual jealousies will cease, the voice of discord will be hushed; and the Christian church, no longer rent into factions and torn by intestine divisions, will present the inviting aspect of a peaceful asylum. So long as the sword of civil authority is employed to extort reluctant contributions for the support even of a purer faith, from those who adopt an erroneous creed, the victim of such a system will continue deaf to the voice of truth, and exclaim—

Quodeunque mihi sic ostendis, incredulus odi.

"The powers of darkness" are only to be "shaken by the unresisted might of weakness." "We have spiritual weapons given us for spiritual combats, and those who go about to conquer subjects for Christ with swords of steel, shall find the base metal break to shivers when it is used, and hurtfully fly in their own faces."‡

\* John xviii. 11, 36.

† 2 Cor. x. 4.

‡ Memoirs of the Life of Col. Hutchinson, 3d. Edit., 8vo., 1810. Vol. I. p. 107. This admirable saying of the admirable Lucy Hutchinson was elicited

Mr. Emlyn, after suffering several months' imprisonment, was liberated in July, 1705. It will be important to inquire whether any encouragement was given in England to this rejected and persecuted Irish minister, who, upon quitting the scene of his former labours and recent sufferings, came to London, where he afterwards lived many years. Did the Presbyterian ministers of the metropolis receive and acknowledge him as a brother? Did they admit him into their pulpits? Did they receive him into their houses, or "bid him God speed"? These inquiries shall be answered by his own son and biographer, and by the late Dr. Kippis, a candid Unitarian—

"Soon after his release, Mr. Emlyn returned to London, where a few friends gathered a small congregation for him, to whom he preached once every Sunday, that he might, if possible, be employed in some degree of usefulness; and this he did without salary or stipend, although his fortune was reduced to a narrow income.

"After a few years, this congregation was dissolved by the death of the principal persons who supported it, and Mr. Emlyn retired into a silent obscurity.

"It was no small trouble to him, that he was laid by from so desirable an employment, which he had been brought up to, and set apart for."\*

"It was a great satisfaction to Mr. Emlyn to perceive, that the doctrine for which he had written, and suffered so much, gradually gained ground both in England and Ireland. Nevertheless, he still continued to be so obnoxious, that none of the divines among the Dissenters in London dared to ask him to preach for them, excepting the ministers of the by a reference to the penal enactments passed in the reign of Elizabeth, to suppress popery; these, she adds, "we now sadly find are the bitterest engines to batter down the pure worship, and destroy the pure worshippers, of God; which I have often looked upon as an evidence that God is not pleased with the conversions that are enforced by men's laws." From the decision of the House of Commons, April 4, 1835, (the day on which the above remarks were written,) there is reason to hope that the attempt, which the experience of centuries has proved to be altogether ineffectual, of "*enforcing* the Reformation" in Ireland, will be speedily abandoned.

\* Memoirs of his Life and Writings, prefixed to vol. I. of his works, 1746, pp. xlv, l, liii.

Baptist congregation at Barbican. These gentlemen, who were Mr. Burroughs and Mr. (afterwards Dr.) James Foster, to shew their catholic temper, and truly Christian spirit, invited him more than once to that office; and, notwithstanding the reflections of the censorious, were not ashamed publicly to own him for a brother.”\*

Mr. Peirce, in a letter to Whiston, dated July 10, 1708, refers to Mr. Emlyn as “a very melancholy instance in a person of great accomplishments for service,” who, by having embraced Arian notions, had then “become wholly useless.”†

A very eminent Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Matthew Henry, of Chester, made the following entries in his diary:—

“1705, September 1st. Mr. Emlyn was with me to-day. After two years’ imprisonment, he got his fine compounded—paid £90. He adheres to the Arian heresy. I had a deal of talk with him, and endeavoured to shew him, that even his own principles were nearer to the Orthodox, than the Socinian, which yet he was inclined to speak favourably of. The Lord keep me in the way of truth.”

“1705, October 5. Had a letter from Mr. Emlyn, who seems rooted in his error—the Lord undeceive him.”

“1707, April 26.—Mr. Emlyn called upon me; who, I perceive, not only retains his corrupt opinions, but seems to me to speak favourably of Deism:‡ tells me there are many Deists, as he finds in conversation; that they triumph in this—that when they meet with such as condemn them, they cannot get them to enter into a fair argument with them.”§

\* *Biographia Britannica*, vol. v. pp. 594-596. His son, recording the single exception above-mentioned, says, “none of the [other] ministers dared venture on asking Mr. E. to preach for them, (although they had no reason to fear his meddling with the controversy) even when Unitarianism ceased to be so frightful a thing as it had been formerly, especially after the year 1719.” *Memoirs*, p. lxii. Mr. Foster was associated with Mr. Burroughs as joint pastor of the *General Baptist Church* at Barbican in 1724. *Wilson’s Dissenting Churches*, vol. II. p. 274.

† *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Mr. Wm. Whiston*, 2d edit. 1753—p. 122.

‡ Mr. Emlyn, it appears from the *Memoirs of Whiston*, was on terms of friendly intercourse with Mr. Chubb, who, after writing in favour of Arianism, “became a great sceptic.” p. 237.

§ Life edit. Williams, pp. 180, 181.

Hence it appears, that in the estimation of a distinguished Presbyterian divine, the propagation of "corrupt opinions" concerning the Trinity, far short of modern Unitarianism,\* was deserving of "censure," not encouragement. Yet, in defiance of facts like these, we are told, that "if the Presbyterians were at any time generally Trinitarian, it was not from abhorrence of other doctrines. Their preference was accompanied by no such feeling."† "The early Presbyterian, even before he deviated from the beaten track of doctrine, would have expressed no feeling of offence at a deviation from the orthodox faith, as expressed in the Articles of the Church of England or the Assembly's Catechism, to which he himself assented." That they denounced "other than Trinitarian doctrines, as unchristian and blasphemous,"‡ shall now be proved.

An eminent Presbyterian minister, in a book published in 1709, repeatedly asserts, in the strongest terms, "the criminality of a denial of these doctrines," employing an epithet that proves the feelings of reprobation and abhorrence with which the opposite errors were then regarded, as involving on the part of those who embraced them deep moral delinquency. That the sentiments expressed in this book met with general concurrence and approbation, appears from the attestation subjoined to the preface, stating that the work needed no explicit recommendation, signed by four eminent Presbyterian ministers of the metropolis, Doctors Williams and Oldfield, Messrs. Robinson and Rosewell. The author, Mr. Simon Browne, was at this time (1709) minister of the Presbyterian (now Unitarian) congregation in Portsmouth; and removed, in 1716, to London, where he became minister of the Presbyterian church in the Old Jewry, "one of the most respectable and considerable in the kingdom." He objected to the principle involved in subscription to human articles, was a zealous opposer of all invasions of the rights of conscience, and utterly disapproved of the narrow views of those who

\* Dr. Kippis states, that Mr. Emlyn was "what is called a high Arian; believing our blessed Saviour to be the first of derived beings, the creator of the world, and an object of worship."—*Biogr. Britan.* vol. v. p. 597.

† *Hist.* p. 53.

‡ *Hist.* p. 46.



were for confining the hopes of salvation within the limits of their own party.\* This excellent person became afterwards the subject of an extraordinary mental hallucination, of which some curious particulars appeared in the Adventurer.†

The book is entitled, "The true Character of the real Christian, or sincere good Man: from Psal. cxix. 113, wherein the Nature of a religious *Hatred* to vain Thoughts, and a *Love* to the Law of God is explained, and these Passions are proved to be the real and distinguishing property of the true Christian." The author, in specifying "what thoughts are to be accounted wicked, as against God the *Redeemer*," employs the following language:—

"Thoughts against the *Deity* of the Redeemer are *wicked* thoughts; for nothing is more evident from Scripture, (if men are willing to understand truths spoken in the most plain and intelligible manner,) than that the great Saviour of the world is, by *nature*, God, and not merely by *office*, as some erroneous men have of late pretended. I will only refer you to one Scripture here, that is home and full to the purpose; Col. i. 16, 17; 'For by him were all things created,' &c. It is plain, that he is here asserted to be the great, efficient, and final cause of all things. By him and for him all things were made. And he that was before all things that were made, must exist from eternity, and therefore must be the Everlasting God," p. 17.

Noticing the "shift to which the enemies of this truth have recourse, that by creation is to be understood the *restitution* of all things in the Gospel state," which he calls an evasion, he says—"No expressions could more fully signify the creation of all things by God the Father, than those which are here made use of." He adds, "But if this be a true account of things, then great wrong is done to our Saviour by doubting or denying his GODHEAD, and therefore such doubts and denials (though formed only in the thoughts) must be exceedingly wicked, because they do so directly take away all the honour and homage that must be due to him as God," pp. 17, 18.

\* Wilson's Dissenting Churches, vol. ii. pp. 340, 341.

† No. 88.

In shewing that thoughts against the mediatorial office of Christ must be wicked, he mentions, “1. Thoughts against the Incarnation of the Eternal Son of God. 2. Against the *Design* of his Incarnation and Sufferings, which (he says) we are plainly told was to become a *sacrifice* for sin, bear punishment instead of the sinner, and make reconciliation and atonement for the transgressions of the people. It must be wicked to entertain and yield to any doubt of this nature, and more wicked to deny or disbelieve his purpose of offering, in our flesh, a sacrifice of atonement, expiating the sins of, and meriting the greatest blessings for, believers.” Under a separate head, he mentions “such thoughts as detract from the value and merit of his Death and Sacrifice, from whatever original they proceed, whether from a disbelief of his Deity, and what the Scripture reveals about his nature and office, &c. are also to be esteemed wicked. When persons have such light thoughts of the evil of sin, as to think the justice of God needs no satisfaction at all, or, at least, no such valuable one as the death of Christ, must be owned to be, by all that believe the doctrine of the Scriptures concerning him, and consider who he is, but that a few good words or wishes of theirs, a little grief for sin, would have atoned the justice of God, and that, therefore, he might have spared the inestimably precious blood of his Son, 1 Pet. i. 18. such thoughts as these are wicked. For if their penitential tears, followed with a more exact behaviour, could deserve pardon and the favour of God, how great a disparagement was it to his wisdom, to pour forth *his own life and blood* as a propitiation for sin. Acts xvi. 20.” In shewing how thoughts that share the work of intercession between Christ and others are wicked, he says—“to use the intercession of any other, must imply that some other besides him hath made propitiation for sin; which is plainly to renounce dependence upon him, and overthrow the Gospel constitution, founded on this blood and atonement,” pp. 19, 20. 27—32.

He proceeds to shew what thoughts are to be accounted wicked as against God the Sanctifier. These he ranks under two heads—against his *Person* and against his *office*—

“First. Thoughts against the *Deity* of the Holy Ghost are wicked. For if he be indeed God, to doubt or deny this must be a great dishonour to him; seeing the denial of this is doing as much as in us lies, to *ungod* him, if I may so speak. And that the Holy Spirit is God equal with the Father and the Son, though proceeding from both, must be evident to such as read the Scriptures with any due attention. For not to take notice of that doubted text, 1 John v. 8., yet there are many texts of scripture that do evidently establish this truth. ’Tis plain that our Saviour himself did command his disciples to baptize in the *name* of the Holy Ghost, as well as in his own name and that of his Father, Matt. xxviii. 19. So that plainly the same *authority* over and *interest* in the persons baptized, is assigned to him as to the Father and the Son, which could not be, unless he were equally God. So, in the usual valediction of the apostle Paul, the communion and fellowship of the Holy Ghost is as commonly requested for the Christians to whom he wrote, as the grace of Christ, and love of God the Father, 2 Cor. xiii. 13., which plainly implies his having an equal interest in them. And besides all this, the most peculiar instance of divine worship and adoration is in scripture attributed to him, inasmuch as a *living temple* is required to be dedicated to him, 1 Cor. iii. 16. chap. vi. 19. Now the dedication of a temple hath ever been esteemed an honour peculiar to the Deity; and Austin’s argument from this text seems very just—If we had been commanded, *saith he*, to build a temple for the Holy Ghost of wood and stones, we should readily have concluded thence, that the Holy Ghost is God, because this worship is due to none but God. But how much more strongly doth this appear, when we ourselves must be his temple, which plainly signifies that we must be devoted to his service? But if the Holy Ghost be God equal with the Father and the Son, then ’tis a plain case, that to doubt of his Divinity must be wicked, because during the continuance of this doubt he must be denied that honour which the acknowledgment of his being God would imply; and the denial of this truth, though in our thoughts only, must for the same reason be a greater wickedness.” pp. 34—36.

If such *thoughts* conceived in the heart are thus described, in what terms would the writer and his Presbyterian brethren have spoken of the denial of these truths, expressed in words and uttered from the lips of their successors in the very pulpits which they at this time occupied !\*

A few years after this book was published, the Dissenters and their academies were vehemently attacked by Sacheverell and other furious high-church bigots. Dr. Theophilus Lobb, afterwards a well-known physician and F. R. S., then minister of the Presbyterian congregation at Yeovil, published in 1712, "A Discourse on Ministerial Instruction, wherein the Being of a God, against the Atheists; the Divine authority of the Scriptures, against the Deists; the doctrine of the TRINITY, against the Socinians, are briefly discussed; the method of salvation stated; and the loyalty, the academies, and nonconformity of the Dissenters vindicated: part of which was preached before the Assembly of Ministers at Taunton, June 11th;" in which, addressing his "reverend brethren," the author says—

"God would have them [our people] believe the doctrine of the ever-blessed and glorious Trinity. We know St. Paul believed and preached this pure article of revealed religion, from several passages in his epistles. That this doctrine is revealed in the holy scriptures, I shall evince by shewing: 1. That the scriptures reveal to us three names, viz. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, neither of which can denote any finite created person. 2. That the sacred revelation informs us, that the Divine Essence belongs to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. 3. That each of these is distinct from the other." In support of the first position, he produces the form of baptism, Matt. xxviii. 19. and explains the phrase, *in the name*, as meaning either in virtue of the authority of, or as an act of religious dedication to, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and the apostolical benediction, 2 Cor. xiii. 14., in which, he says, blessings are supplicated which no created being can bestow pp. 62—64.

Among the proofs of the second position, one is, "Because

\* The chapel at Portsmouth, of which Mr. Browne was minister (rebuilt in 1718) is now called "The Unitarian Chapel."

the scriptures affirm the Son to be *the Creator of all things*. This is unquestionably evident from John i. 1, 2, 3, 14. Therefore he is God, if he is the Creator, the Divine essence certainly belongs to him. It is in vain for any to plead that he was so only by office, when the evangelist assures us that he is the maker of all things, in as full and significant terms as Moses informs us, in the beginning of Genesis, that God made the heavens and the earth. He is God, *as creator*, which may sufficiently convince us of his Deity. pp. 66—68.

“There are many other arguments which might be brought to evince this Grand Truth; as, that religious worship must be given only to the most high God, as appears from Deut. vi. 13. Matt. iv. 10.; and yet, by positive commands, we are obliged to pay it to Jesus, the Son of God, as is evident from John v. 23. Col. iii. 24., and many other places; whence it will follow, that the Divine Essence belongs to the Son, which only can free us from the guilt of idolatry in performing religious adorations to him,” p. 70.

He exclaims, “How barbarous and horrid is it to traduce and represent our academies as seminaries, where Atheism, Deism, Tritheism, Socinianism, [&c.] are openly professed and taught!” We challenge the whole world to prove the least tittle of this *black charge* against us. What evidences of orthodoxy have, or can any give, which the Dissenters have not given? Do our conforming brethren plead their subscribing the doctrinal Articles of the Church;—we boldly plead the same.” pp. 88, 89. Dr. Nichols, in a work animadverting on the principles of Dissenters, acquits them of abetting Socinianism. Objecting to the posture used by them in celebrating the Lord’s supper, he says—“Indeed, the Socinians, who own nothing in this sacrament but a commemoration, do, agreeably enough to their principles, sit at the receiving of it; but for our adversaries to imitate these men, *whose opinions in other things they detest*, shews a genius not disposed to weigh things impartially,” &c. “We fear not (says Peirce) to call this an odious calumny, since we herein imitate the custom of Christ and his apostles, and not the Socinians.”\*

\* Vindication of the Dissenters, p. 496.

The Presbyterians of the founders' era, commonly denounce Socinian tenets as anti-Christian and impious, and stigmatise those who maintained them as blasphemers and infidels.

Mr. Thomas Watson, an ejected Presbyterian minister, left in MS. a volume of Catechetical Lectures, which, after his death, was published (folio, 1692) under this title—"A Body of Practical Divinity, consisting of above 176 Sermons on the Lesser Catechism, composed by the Assembly of Divines," &c. Prefixed is an attestation by Mr. William Lorimer, a learned Presbyterian minister, that he found them "in the main agreeable unto the Doctrinal Articles of the Church of England, and unto the Westminster Assembly's Confession of Faith, and Catechisms." The work is recommended by Drs. Bates and Williams, Mr. Howe, and twenty-three other London ministers, most of them Presbyterians. The author says, "Take away the distinction of the Persons in the Trinity, and you overthrow man's redemption." Speaking of what he calls "the execrable opinion of the *Socinians*, who deny the Divinity of the Lord Jesus," he says, "If to oppose Christ's members be such a sin, what is it to oppose Christ himself? . . . How sacrilegious is the Socinian, who would rob Christ of the best flower of his crown, his Godhead!" Speaking of the Arians, who deny the Holy Ghost to be God, he represents the denial, by "men who go for Christians, of this article of their creed, the Godhead of the Holy Spirit," as equivalent to renouncing their baptism. He adds, "We can be no good Christians without the firm belief of the Trinity;" and after quoting expressions ascribed to some Quakers, who denied "the Person of Christ" as an object of faith in order to salvation, asks, "How are they to be abhorred who go under the name of Christians yet undervalue and renounce Jesus Christ! Could the devil himself speak worse blasphemy? They would pull up all religion by the roots, and take away that corner-stone on which the hope of our salvation is built."—pp. 63, 64.\*

\* That Mr. Watson was not one of those intolerant religious professors who rigorously demanded, and were ready to enforce, on pain of damnation, a punctilious agreement with all the articles contained in any *human* scheme of doctrine, but, like Baxter and the other leading Presbyterian divines, carefully distinguished

Mr. James Owen, one of the most learned of the early Presbyterian tutors, in a paper inserted in his *Life*, ably exposes the absurdity of what may be called the Socinian principle, that reason is the criterion to which all supernatural facts and doctrines, though attested by sufficient evidence, are to be subjected—a principle which led many in those licentious times to reject Revelation.\*

“There are two sorts of persons that oppose Revelation, the *Socinians and Deists*. The former, by making Reason the measure and rule of Revelation, do in effect explode it, especially in those supernatural verities that are above Reason : the latter, by setting up the dictates of natural Reason, as the only rule and measure of all Religion, do, with unparalleled confidence, exclude all Revelation. The *Socinians* prefer the oracles of Reason, (as they call them,) to the oracles of God; for they receive not the Divine Oracles any further than they may be comprehended by those of Reason, and so, by one impious dash of their pen, they expunge all the sublime Doctrines of our holy Religion that are of supernatural Revelation, and not suited to those ideas they have framed to themselves, by conversing with sensible objects. They advance a new sort of Christianity, divested of all its Mysteries, which are the vital principles that animate its moral precepts. I would ask these pretended monopolists of Reason, why should it seem absurd to admit Mysteries in Religion which the Scriptures assert; when the more sober and wiser Heathens have unanimously acknow-

between doctrines of vital importance to the *Christian* system, and subordinate or non-essential truths, will appear from the following passage in a practical treatise entitled “A Divine Cordial, or the transcendent Privilege of those that love God,” &c., published so early as 1663.

“We love the saints, though in some lesser things they differ from us. Perhaps another Christian hath not so much light as thou, and that may make him err in some things; wilt thou presently unsaint him, because he cannot come up to thy light? Where there is union in *Fundamentals*, there ought to be union in *affections*.” Page 157.

\* The earliest Unitarians among the Presbyterians, about half a century ago, assumed the title of *Rational Dissenters*, which has been wisely dropped by their successors.

ledged, and the imperfections of our intellectual attainments render [them] necessary?

“Are not the very works of nature mysterious and unaccountable?” He then mentions some “inexplicable difficulties” attending the facts of physical Science and mental Philosophy. “As the *Pyrrhonian* modesty, which pretended to know nothing, was destructive of Natural Religion; so is the *Socinian* confidence, which undertakes to comprehend all things, even the *deep things* of God, destructive of Supernatural Revelation. The *Academics* confessed their ignorance, even of those things that might be known; the *Socinians* arrogate to themselves the knowledge of the most unintelligible, [incomprehensible?] verities; and because their Reason stands upon the same level with the rest of mankind, and can’t ascend the heights of Divine Mysteries, they disparage, debase, and pervert them to the absurdest meanings.

“I know not a more convincing instance of Original Corruption, than to attempt an accommodation of the transcendent Mysteries of Christianity to our shallow and depraved reasonings. “Can any thing be more absurd than to measure an *Infinite Being* by such maxims and propositions as respect *finite beings*? This is to make a point run parallel with an infinite line, to contain the ocean in the hollow of an hand, and to measure the vast spaces of heaven with a span. Yet this is the strength of the *Socinians’* Reason. ‘There can be no instance given, (say they,) of Three Persons in One Nature, among finite beings;’ therefore there can be no such thing in an Infinite Being; as if an Infinite Being were to be measured by those that are finite. To reject the Sacred Trinity, is to renounce our Baptismal Covenant; for we are baptized in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and he that denieth the Son hath not the Father, 1 John ii. 23.”

He then exposes the inconsistency of the old Socinians, in denying Christ to be God by Nature, and yet giving him Divine adoration, and thus “deifying a mere creature.”

“It is evident that our Lord Jesus, in his discourses with the Jews, affirmed himself to be the Son of God, to be God by Nature, equal with the Father. John v. 18, and viii. 58.



Thus the Jews understood him, and charged him with Blasphemy, because, being a mere man as they supposed, he made himself God. John x. 33. Christ vindicates himself from the imputation of Blasphemy in making himself the Son of God, v. 36. He asserted this great Truth to the last, and sealed it with his blood. His confession, that he was the Christ the Son of God, was the reputed Blasphemy for which the great Council of the Jews condemned him. The *Socinians*, therefore, in disowning Christ to be *God, equal with the Father*, which is the same with being the Son of God, do, in effect, consent to the unrighteous sentence which the Jewish Sanhedrim passed upon the Lord of Life. Not to own him God equal with the Father, is to condemn him for a Blasphemer."

After tracing, by a slight historical sketch, the rise and progress of the Heresy to the time of Arius, he says—"This Gangrene infected all the Eastern Churches, and ruined the Vitals of Christianity; provoked the Lord to remove their candlestick out of its place, as he had threatened; and to subject them to the Mahometan yoke, under which they groan to this day. And 'tis remarkable that the several streams of *Arianism* did at last disembody themselves in the *Dead Sea of Mahometism*. The Mahometans own Jesus Christ to be a great *Prophet*, but a mere man; and the Socinians make no more of him; so that you may call Mahometism the dregs of Arianism, and Socinianism the dregs of Mahometism."

The next section begins thus, "Deism is a corrupt stream that flows from the impure fountain of Socinianism."\*

Mr. Cooper represents, that during several years previous to 1704, there had been "much canvassing of the doctrine of the Trinity;" and thence attempts to deduce, as a legitimate inference, that "latitudinarian opinions respecting the [distinctions in] the Godhead, had begun even thus early to prevail amongst the *Presbyterians*." He states, that at the close of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth

\* Some Account of the Life and Writings of Mr. James Owen, 12mo. 1709, by Rev. Charles Owen, of Warrington, pp. 137—148. See p. 145, ante.

century, "there was much controversy, as well amongst those who conformed to the Established Church, as those who had seceded from it, respecting the doctrine of three persons in the Godhead, the exact relation of these persons to each other, and the distinction that subsists between them: and that the opinions upon those subjects, commonly known by the terms of Arian, Socinian, and Unitarian, in all their different shades and varieties, discernible only by theological vision, were propounded and discussed;"\* but he mentions no publication *written by an English Presbyterian*, in which *any* of these opinions were defended. He has copied the titles of numerous tracts on these mysterious points of speculative inquiry, published between 1690 and 1695, written by divines of the Established Church, and by unknown authors. The productions of the latter, who opposed the orthodox Trinitarian doctrine, were printed at the expence of Mr. Thomas Firmin, a wealthy and charitable merchant of London, who disclaimed being a Dissenter, and disapproved of a secession from the worship of the Established Church, which he himself attended. Mr. Firmin was on terms of friendly intercourse with Tillotson, and other dignitaries of the Church, who, from this circumstance, incurred the imputation of being secretly favourable to his erroneous opinions. There is only one in Mr. Cooper's long list of tracts known to have been written by a Dissenter,—"*A Calm and Sober Inquiry concerning the Possibility of a Trinity in the Godhead, 12mo. 1694,*" by Mr. Howe. This eminent divine, who is called "one of the first founders of the Presbyterian body,"† speaking of the arts then used by Socinians to distort the genuine sense of the word of God, and "studiously to wiredraw many passages to quite other meanings," describes them in these words,—"*torturing wit, and racking invention to the uttermost, to do a laboured and artificial violence, (by, I know not what screws and engines,) to so numerous plain texts of Scripture, only to undeify our glorious Redeemer, and do the utmost despite to the Spirit of grace.*"‡

Mr. Cooper proposes to "ascertain what were the sentiments of the Dissenters, in general," upon the Act against Blasphemy,

\* Substance of Speech, pp. 33, 34.

† Hist. p. 40.

‡ Pp. 59—62.

and arrives at the conclusion that "their sentiments did not coincide with its provisions," whence he infers that the Presbyterian founders of trusts for the encouragement of preaching would have comprehended among the objects of their bounty those who embraced, or might embrace any of the "doctrines thereby condemned as profane and blasphemous."\* His argument proceeds upon a mere assumption, and is nullified by the fact, that not only were Dissenters, especially the Presbyterians, "adverse to the opinions of the Unitarians as unscriptural and heretical," but so far from "condemning," they approved of "the persecuting severity of this Act." "I remember well, says Mr. Emlyn, [speaking of the Dissenters.] in their Address to King William on his accession to the throne, they desired *the Rule of Christianity might be the Rule of Conformity*: but in their Address in 1697, (when a Toleration was settled,) presented by the same hand, (Dr. Bates,) they desire earnestly a restraint of the licentiousness of the press, in relation to the Unitarians' books."† The biographer of Firmin, also, who calls that gentleman "Curator of the Unitarian Religion," says—"The malice of any whomsoever against the English Unitarians, comes now too late. They less dissent from the Church (if they are at all Dissenters) than any other denomination of Dissenters: therefore let those Dissenters look to it, who have promoted a bill, in name and pretext against Immorality and *Blasphemy*; in truth and real design, against the *Unitarians*."‡

How grossly erroneous to represent as patrons of those who propagated Socinian tenets,—as accessories to what in their eyes amounted to a heinous moral offence—men who, instead of being advocates for "a most unbounded toleration," or even for "free inquiry without limit or restriction," availed

\* Substance of Speech, p. 65.

† Appendix to Narrative prefixed to Collection of Tracts, 1719. p. lii.

‡ Life, 12mo. 1698, p. 26. See also Toulmin's Historical View, pp. 120—126. The Unitarians of King William's reign were favourable to prelatical episcopacy. Mr. Firmin, speaking for himself, "and most other (if not *all*) Unitarians," says, "there is a threefold distinction of Church Officers,—Bishops, Presbyters, or Priests, and Deacons."—Account of his Religion annexed to his Life, p. 36. In 1697 "Mr. Firmin readily embraced a reconciliation with the Church."

themselves of their privilege of access to the royal presence to solicit the "imposing of restraints" on this obnoxious class of religionists, and *promoted* that legislative interference which produced, in 1698, the Act "for the more effectual suppressing of Blasphemy and Profaneness," (9 & 10 William III. c. 32,) imposing penalties on those who deny the doctrine of the Trinity. Instead of "*approving* contradictory decisions" on *momentous* points of doctrine, their views coincided with those which dictated the Address presented to the King by the House of Commons, Feb. 17, 1698, shortly before the passing of this Act, praying that the royal authority might be interposed "for the suppressing all pernicious books and pamphlets, which contain, in them impious doctrines against the Holy Trinity, and other Fundamental Articles of our Faith, tending to the subversion of the Christian Religion."

Dr. Bates, their leader on this occasion, published a practical work in 1699, entitled, "Spiritual Perfection unfolded and enforced, from 2 Cor. vii. 1," in which he speaks in terms of execration of the Unitarian tenets. A few passages, bearing directly on the question, shall be inserted.

"'Tis our duty to admire the mysterious Doctrines of the Gospel, which we do understand, and to adore those we do not. We may observe the same connexion in errors as in divine truths; for they who rob our Saviour of his natural glory, his Eternal Deity, vilify and disbelieve the value and virtue of his priestly office, by which our pardon is obtained. In short, the fabric of our salvation is built on the contrivance and consent of the Divine Persons, and the concurrence and concord of the divine attributes. 'Tis certainly much more suitable to the reasonable mind to acknowledge that things may be true which we are not able to conceive and comprehend, than to deny the natural and proper sense of many clear and express texts of Scripture that declare those things. And by this may we judge of the glosses of *Socinus* and his followers, who, without reverence of the majesty of God, and the sincerity of his word, rack the Scriptures to make them speak what they do not, and use all arts to silence them in what they do reveal. Unhappy men! that affect to be

esteemed ingenious and subtile, to the extreme hazard of their own salvation. How much safer and more easy is it to believe the plain sense of the Scriptures, than the turns and shifts that are invented to elude it, and extricate heretical persons out of the difficulties that attend their opinions. I shall add, the doctrine of the Trinity is so expressly set down in the Gospel of Christ, that 'tis impossible the Son of God, who is Infinite and Eternal Love, who gave himself for our redemption, should have declared it, and engaged his disciples in all ages and places in an error of such dreadful consequence as the worshipping those who are not God.”\*

Dr. Bates, though himself a friend to free inquiry,† thus repudiates that alleged Presbyterian principle—“the innocence of involuntary error”—‡

“’Tis alleged, that if a person sincerely searches into the Scripture, and cannot be convinced that the supernatural doctrines of the Trinity, and others depending upon it, are contained in them, he shall not be condemned by the righteous judge of the world for involuntary and speculative errors. To this I answer,—this pretence has deceived many who were guilty of damnable Heresies, and there is great reason to fear deceives men still. *The heart is deceitful above all things,* and most deceitful to itself. Who can say that neither interest nor passion, neither hope nor fear, neither anger nor ambition, have intervened in his inquiry after truth, but he has preferred the knowledge of divine truths before all temporal respects, and yet he cannot believe what the Scripture reveals of the Nature of God, and the œconomy of our salvation: let this imaginary man produce his plea, for I believe there was never any such. There are many that make reason the

\* Pp. 160, 162.

† In a Funeral Sermon for Baxter, 12mo. 1692, Dr. Bates declares his own judgment in accordance with that of his illustrious friend :—“ His inquiring mind was freed from the servile dejection and bondage of an implicit faith. He adhered to the Scriptures as the perfect Rule of Faith, and searched whether the doctrines received and taught were consonant to it. This is the duty of every Christian, according to his capacity, especially of ministers, and the necessary means to open the mind for divine knowledge and for the advancement of the truth.” P. 106.

‡ Hist. p. 161.

sovereign rule of faith, and determine such things cannot be true, because they cannot understand how they can be true. Prodigious inference! the most absurd of all errors, that makes the narrow mind of man the measure of all things. This is the proper principle of that horrible composition of Heresies and execrable Impieties, which so many that are Christians in profession, but Antichristians in belief, boldly publish. They will choose to err in matters of infinite importance, rather than confess their ignorance. And which is astonishing, they will readily acknowledge the defectiveness of reason with respect to the understanding of themselves; but insolently arrogate a right to determine things in the Nature of God.—'Tis alleged, that speculative errors cannot be damnable. To this I answer,—

“1. The understanding of man is now dark and disordered; and in the points of religion that are revealed, any error induces guilt, and, if obstinately defended, exposes to judgment. Some truths are written because necessary to be believed; others are to be believed, because written.

“2. According to the quality of the truths revealed in Scripture, such is the hurtfulness of the errors that are opposite to them. Some truths are necessary, others profitable: some errors are directly opposite to the saving truths of the Gospel, others by consequence undermine them. Those who *deny the Lord that bought them, are guilty of damnable Heresies, capital errors, not holding the head.* Col. ii. 19.

“3. The doctrine of the Trinity is not a mere speculative truth, nor the denial of it a speculative error. The Trinity is not only an object of Faith, but of Worship. In baptism, we are dedicated to the sacred Trinity, *in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, which clearly proves they are of the same authority and power, and, consequently, of the same nature: for 'tis impossible to conceive of three infinite Beings, for by necessity one would limit another. The apostle declares, *without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh.* The nature and end of this Divine mystery, is to form the spirits of men to believe, and love, and obey God.—Briefly, God commands us to believe in

his Son. Without faith in him we are incapable of redemption by him. 'Tis a high contempt of the truth and goodness of God not to yield a firm assent to what he has revealed concerning our salvation by his incarnate Son. He that believes not the record that God hath given of his Son, *makes God a liar*, 1 John v. 10. This infinitely provokes him, and inflames his indignation. To disbelieve the testimony that Jesus Christ has given of the Divinity of his Person and doctrine, is to despise him. It robs him of his essential and his acquired glory by the work of our redemption." pp. 163—167.

In 1700, Mr. Nathaniel Taylor, then minister and one of the lecturers at Salters' Hall, published "A Discourse of the Nature and Necessity of Faith in Jesus Christ: with an Answer to the Pleas of our Modern Unitarians, for the sufficiency of bare Morality or mere Charity to Salvation." In the epistle to the reader, after referring to one of the laws of motion, that heavy bodies, in falling, acquire increased velocity as they descend, he says, "Something like this there is in Heresy; for when once men have taken one step over the fatal precipice, what through the weight of the innate principle of corruption, and what through the secret influence of the invisible powers of darkness, down they tumble apace with greater speed every day than other, till they drop into the lake of open Infidelity, which lies at the bottom; and whither their next fall will be, is easy to determine. We have a proof of this in some of the foreign Unitarians. They began with denying the Deity and Satisfaction of Christ. Thence Franciscus Davidis, and others, proceeded to deny the lawfulness of giving religious worship to him; with whom, in this, our English Unitarians, who are their spawn, do generally fall in. Smalcus reproaches this tribe as persons of little understanding, and puffed up with a Jewish spirit. And Socinus himself every where thunders against them as *Jews* and *Mahometans* more than *Heretics*, unworthy of the Christian name, who did in reality and in their hearts altogether deny Jesus to be the Messiah; that nothing more wicked could have been invented for depraving our religion; that they can't be saved," and says, 'this opinion does by a short cut lead to Epicureism and Atheism.'

“Notwithstanding all this heat, it will be impossible to maintain the giving religious worship to Christ, when his Deity, the foundation thereof, is denied. For religiously to pray to a mere creature, is vile Idolatry.” After some farther extracts, he adds—“But I leave them to squabble and fight it out among themselves, as well as they can. For these zealous sticklers for unlimited Toleration did formerly, by their own confession, very bitterly persecute one another about this point; though now their followers among us are for compounding the matter. I proceed to shew, in a few instances, the effects of these principles, which we shall find to be agreeable to their natural tendency, as their great patriarch (Socinus) hath forewarned us.” He then mentions some individuals, who virtually rejected either the whole Scripture or the New Testament. “The same accursed weed of Socinianism, being transplanted into our English soil, hath brought forth the same fruit. My main business is with the Vindicator, [of Mr. Firmin’s memory,] whose design is to subvert the Gospel of my blessed Lord and Saviour. Downright infidelity is the thing he drives at. Who or what he is, I have not been solicitous to enquire. I know no more of him than what he tells us of himself, viz. that he is the son of a citizen, and a small dealer among them, &c. And, saith he ‘I write in haste.’ Indeed he is so much in haste, that he has dropt all his Christianity by the way, if ever he had any.”

In explaining the nature of faith in Christ, he says, “It supposes a stedfast persuasion of his Deity.” p.38. Declining to discuss the question of “the possibility of the salvation of the heathen,” he says, “All that I assert is, that it is impossible for any *among us, who live when and where the Gospel is published*, to be saved, if they do not believe on our Lord Jesus Christ,” p. 96. He then shews, “the heinous nature of unbelief, which,” he says, “reflects the greatest dishonour on God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,” p.98. This he particularly explains, and adds—“Now, how can that man be saved, who lives and dies under the prevailing, reigning guilt of this sin, which does in so heinous a manner oppose the whole Trinity?” p. 101.

In 1697 was printed a tract, in 4to. (now exceedingly scarce,)



by Richard Frankland, the celebrated Nonconformist tutor, whose academy was “the great institution for the North;” of which, according to Mr. Hunter, “the college at York is the present representative,”\* entitled, “Reflections on a Letter writ by a nameless Author, to the Reverend Clergy of both Universities, and on his bold Reflections on the Trinity, &c.” In a preface, subscribed “O. H.,” the writer, Mr. Oliver Heywood, a very eminent Presbyterian minister in Yorkshire, speaks of the various attempts made to “pull down the Son of God from the throne of his glory, and degrade him of his Deity, the most orient pearl in his crown.” After briefly noticing several ancient Anti-Trinitarian heretics, and mentioning that “the errors settled in Faustus Socinus, A.D. 1565,” &c. he says—“One thing is observable; several in that confused company denying religious worship to Christ, Socinus contended with them, but was silenced and baffled by his own principles, who held that Christ was mere man, therefore, by consequence, it would be idolatry to worship him. There were also several errors broached by Socinus; [among these he mentions, that there’s no original sin; that Christ made no satisfaction for sin; that we are not justified by his righteousness, but our own.] These he contended for in their synods, and prevailed so, by the help of Smalcus and other artifices, that in twenty-four years he got his opinions enthroned in Poland, which are not rooted out to this day.

“Surely ’tis a thousand pities, that in England, a *Goshen*, a land of light, where the Gospel-sun hath shined in its meridian splendor, such black fogs should rise out of the bottomless pit, as to darken our horizon. *Trinitas*, saith one, *est veræ Theologiæ Fundamentum, quæ consequentes omnes fere Doctrinas quasi animat*; Whoso denies the Trinity, denies his baptism; for we are baptized in, or into the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

“The other dangerous and damnable doctrine is, that of denying the Lord that bought us, (2 Peter, ii. 1,) revived out of the rubbish of ancient heresies. Who could imagine that

\* Hist. Def. pp. 12, 13.

*Jews and Turks* should be bred in *England*? Denying Christ's Divinity, doth cut the very sinews of our hopes of redemption and consolation. Neither angels nor men could have pacified God's wrath, or satisfied justice, or brought in everlasting righteousness. Such doctrines undermine and pluck up the pillars of our Christian Religion; and yet, in these licentious days, such Heresies are publicly broached, &c. Methinks the question of our blessed Lord, that non-plust the Pharisees, (Matt. xxii. 45,) should puzzle these anti-Christian spirits that deny Christ's Divinity. [If David then call him Lord, how is he his Son?] Is the son greater than the father? Surely the Godhead of the Messiah advanceth him above king David. It's true the plumbline of reason is too short to fathom this Mystery; but where reason cannot wade, faith must swim, having so good a card and guide as the Holy Ghost. The Trinity of Persons, and Hypostatical Union of Godhead and manhood in Christ, bieng so fully revealed in Scripture, let us hold them fast, and contend for them as our freehold."

Mr. Heywood says, the author had been prompted to this undertaking "purely by a zeal for God, his cause, truth, and glory, and the preventing of young students being poisoned by soul-destructive errors."\*

Mr. Frankland thus reasons from the Word of God:—"Does not that Scripture (John i. 1—3, 14,) expressly affirm that the Word, styled the only begotten of the Father, was in the

\* That Mr. Oliver Heywood was the author of the Preface, appears by an original letter from Mr. Frankland to him, dated Rathmell, March 1, 1696-7, in the British Museum, in which he says—"I now send you my manuscript. I wholly commit it to you, and to the honest stationer, your neighbour; yet humbly requesting of you (which you freely promised) that you will add a preface. That this work of mine, as designed in defence of the Gospel of our great God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, against a scoffing adversary, may find acceptance, shall be the earnest prayer," &c. The preface is dated March 11. In a letter to his son, Eliezer, dated March, 16, 1696-7, Mr. Heywood says, "I have prefixed an epistle to a piece of Mr. Frankland's against Socinians. Francis Bentley will get it printed." And Mr. Frankland, in a letter to Ralph Thoresby, esq., dated Rathmell, June 14, 1697, in my possession, says, "I hope my manuscript about y<sup>e</sup> Trinity, with dear brother Heywood's preface to it, is got printed by Frank Bentley, of Halifax."

beginning, was with God, was God, the great creator and maker of all things, &c.? It's a wonder this author, when he reads such a Scripture as this, can forbear to cast forth reproaches on the divinely inspired Evangelist himself; for could any Trinitarian have with greater evidence set forth, 1. That this Word was from the beginning, and before the beginning of all created beings, and therefore from eternity? 2. That in this beginning he was with God, and therefore a distinct person from God the Father? 3. That he was God, viz. the same blessed God with the Father, as to essence? 4. That all things were made by him, and that without him was not any thing made that was made; that, therefore, the Father did make nothing but in conjunction with the Word, or Son, not in separation from him, as this author would have it? And as nothing that was made, was made without this Word, so this Word himself was not made, except he make himself, but is the eternal, increated Being. Let this author shew now, if he can, what he hath to charge Trinitarians with, which he may not as well charge on this blessed Apostle."—p. 40.

Mr. Frankland does not hesitate to charge this writer, who had represented the Trinitarians as idolaters, with blasphemy: "Is it only these [Trinitarians] who pay that same Divine worship to the Son, become our Redeemer, which they pay to the Father in conjunction with him; and do not the innumerable companies of blessed angels and saints pay the very same? Let him consult Rev. v. 11—13, and he'll find they do; and must all these therefore be idolaters? Oh, Blasphemy! And as to the blessed Spirit, is it only the late Trinitarians who acknowledge his infinity and omniscience; did not the royal prophet David do the same? *Psa. cxxxix. 7, 8, &c.* Is it only these that declare him to be the true God, the great searcher of hearts; and did not the apostle Peter declare as much when he told Ananias, *Acts v. 3, 4. Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God?* And did not Ananias to his cost find it so? The author might do well to consider who it is he casts his blasphemous reproaches on." He adds, "This is dreadful. Before he had gone thus far, he might well have considered what our Lord saith, *Matt. xii. 31.* 'All manner of

sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men;' or if it be not too late, I wish he might yet consider it, and repent," pp. 50, 51. The learned author, stating his reason for examining the allegations against Trinitarians by this writer, speaks of "having raked into the filthy dunghill of his blasphemies." p. 49.

Such were the feelings of repugnance and disgust with which these excellent men regarded the tenets of their Socinian contemporaries. Could they have foreseen that ecclesiastical endowments founded by them, would in future years be appropriated to the use of their ultra-Socinian descendants and successors, would no sentiment akin to indignation have been excited in their breast? Would they have been conscious of no emotions of grief or displeasure—would they not have started and shrunk with horror at the very thought of persons claiming to be their representatives, perverting those endowments to the support of opinions, an approximation to which, was contemplated by them with abhorrence as subversive of that Gospel which they prized above liberty or life?\*

\* It was not only on account of his rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity, that the Presbyterians held the tenets of Socinus in abhorrence—as the following language of Baxter will prove.—“*The Heathenish Socinians* that deny the immortality of the soul, (yea, worse than heathenish, for most heathens do maintain it,) must deny it to *Christ himself*, as well as to his members. For if ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,’ be words that prove not the surviving of the *spirit* of Stephen; then ‘Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,’ will not prove the surviving of the spirit of Christ. And then what do these Infidels make of Christ, who also deny his Deity?” *Practical Works*, folio 1707. Vol. iv. p. 865.

Mr. Nathaniel Taylor, thus writes in 1700, “Our modern Infidels fight against our Blessed Saviour with his own sword; and turn the Scriptures themselves, as they manage them, into an engine to batter down the necessity of Faith in Him; and openly contend that mere Morality, or bare Charity to the poor, is sufficient to any man’s Salvation. Several texts they bring, (and we know their Father could quote Scripture long before them,) to this purpose out of the Old Testament, and several out of the New; and by that time the reader sees all their objections, he will not think I have called them out of their name, when I term them *Infidels*, though, in the New Style, they affect to pass for *Unitarians*.” *Discourse of Faith in Jesus Christ*, pp. 111, 112.—So remote from truth is the assertion, concerning the English Presbyterians, that “it was their principle to admit the reception or rejection of *any* religious doctrine,” and in reference to *all* disputed points, to “approve of the decisions of each, though they may be contradictory.”

Both Mr. Frankland and Mr. Oliver Heywood were personally acquainted with a venerable and excellent person, Dame Sarah Hewley, whose name has lately attracted considerable public interest. Mr Heywood was her intimate friend, and, occasionally at least, her spiritual adviser.\* His published writings prove him to have been a thorough and zealous Calvinist;† and there is no evidence in support of the assertion that she “had dropped her Calvinism.” This “elect lady” is entitled to high rank among those truly Noble men and Hon-

\* “Mr. Oliver Heywood, the Yorkshire minister, was a frequent guest of Lady Hewley: he returned her kindness by his most acceptable ministrations in her family. He was admitted to her secret counsels; he advised her in some difficulties; he comforted her in some distresses.” Such is the testimony of Mr. Hunter, who has carefully examined the copious MSS. left by Mr. Heywood. —Hist. Def. p. 66.

† Mr. Heywood, in a Sermon upon the death of Mr. Sharp, minister of the Presbyterian Chapel at Leeds, preached Sept. 6, 1693, describes him as “orthodox—sound against the errors of the times, Pelagianism, Socinianism, and Arminianism.”—Diary of Ralph Thoresby, esq. Vol. I. p. 248

Both Mr. Heywood and Mr. Frankland were active promoters of the union between the Presbyterians and Independents in Yorkshire. See p. 123. ante.

That Mr. Frankland was a Calvinist, and that the system of doctrine in which he instructed his pupils as being in accordance with Scripture, was in substance that maintained by the great Reformer of Geneva, will appear from the following passage in Mr. James Owen’s Defence of Scripture-Ordination.

“Why mayn’t Mr. Frankland’s pupils with the same freedom determine for *Calvin*, as many raw youths that come from the universities do for their beloved *Arminius*? But the reason why they determine against *Arminius* is, because their judicious and learned tutor directed them to study the Scriptures and their own hearts, which enabled them betimes to exalt the free grace of God, and to depress the proud enslaved will of man.

“A son of the Church should not wonder that Mr. Frankland should acquaint his scholars with the *orthodox ancient doctrine of the Church of England*, whose learned divines subscribed the Decrees of the *Calvinistical Synod of Dort*, in conformity to the doctrine of the English Church, which preferred them after their return, and never censured that act of theirs.”—The Validity of the Dissenting Ministry. Published by Charles Owen, 8vo. 1716, p. 96.

This passage proves that Mr. Frankland’s Academy, though its advantages were not restricted to “one favoured sect,” was no “*Arminian School*.” This excellent person agreed in opinion with another distinguished Tutor among Dissenters, (Dr. Doddridge,) that “they who are honoured with the great trust of training up the ministers of Christ, should be particularly careful to *nourish* and educate in *the words of faith and of good doctrine*, those whose business it must be to maintain the faith of Christ in the world, and to instruct others in his doctrine.”—Family Expositor on 1 Tim. iv. 6—16. (Improvement.)

ourable women by whom the infant Nonconformist churches, and their pastors, were cherished and protected, during the storm of persecution, which, with transient intervals of treacherous calm, raged against them till the dawn of liberty in 1688. This distinguished person, after having liberally contributed to the support of Nonconformist ministers, and of the chapel (reputed Presbyterian) in St. Saviour Gate, York, (where she resided,) of which she had been one of the founders, established, in 1704 and 1707, munificent trusts for the promotion of an evangelical and zealous ministry. Whether she could have contemplated the application of any portion of the proceeds to the support of Unitarian preachers and students—whether it came within the scope of her intention, that such preachers and students should ever be allowed to participate in her bounty, is the question upon which the parties, by whom proceedings have been instituted in the Court of Chancery, are desirous of obtaining a legal adjudication. Let her real intention, when by any means ascertained, be held inviolably sacred, and, in future, executed with scrupulous fidelity. The only question to be determined is, What was the purpose and design of the founder? If this excellent lady, herself an *orthodox* Nonconformist, unquestionably a Trinitarian, and in all probability a Calvinist, intended to designate and describe religious teachers maintaining certain doctrines, by the phrase carefully selected and repeatedly used to denote and specify the objects of her bounty—“preachers of CHRIST’S HOLY GOSPEL”—to *such* teachers, let the whole proceeds be hereafter exclusively applied. If, on the contrary, in order to a faithful administration of the trust, persons holding opposite and conflicting systems of doctrine are to be admitted to a participation in its benefits—if this orthodox lady could have regarded as “pious and sincere Christians,” those who entertain opinions considered in the highest degree *offensive* by the most eminent contemporary Presbyterian divines, and by some with whom she was intimate—doctrines which a revered friend, in the preface to a publication printed in Yorkshire, had lately declared, “undermine and pluck up the pillars of our Christian religion;”—in that case, let the claim of Unitarians to partake of her bounty be recognised as just. If

instead of regarding it as a virtuous practice to "view with equal charity *all* conscientious differences of doctrine," the Presbyterians of her time held the tenets of their Socinian contemporaries in *abhorrence*, as "unchristian and blasphemous," the inevitable legal presumption is, that she would herself have contemplated such application of *any portion* of her charitable trust-funds with "pious horror."\*

A trust created for the express purpose of aiding preachers of *Christ's holy Gospel*, (not, as Mr. Cooper states, in "favour of godly preachers generally,") the venerable foundress belonging to a class who openly professed, and strenuously maintained, views of Christian truth then, as now, considered "orthodox,"—must be perverted from her *original* and *unalterable* intention, when applied to the support and propagation of opinions directly opposed to those views, and therefore (in her judgment) subversive of *the Gospel*, which—as Mr. Cappe, who afterwards disseminated Unitarian doctrines in her chapel, has himself declared—can undergo no change.†

Lady Hewley died at a very advanced age, August 23, 1710,

\* A learned "professional gentleman," author of a plausible and ingenious pamphlet on the other side, ('Observations on the Title of Unitarians,' &c.) represents it as the rule of proceeding, in reference to such cases, adopted by the highest legal authorities, that "where the donor has given no express direction, or only incomplete directions as to doctrine, if the theological system, or tenets of the sect or party to which the donor belonged can be ascertained, [though his or her "peculiar personal opinions" may not be exactly known,] it is to be inferred, as far as the matter is left for inference, that his or her designs for Christianity were accordant with that system and those tenets."—p. 17.

† "The Gospel lives, though the preachers of the Gospel die. In that there is no change. The Everlasting Gospel is its name."—A sermon at the chapel in St. Saviour-Gate, York, to a Congregation of Protestant Dissenters, on the death of the Rev. Mr. Edward Sandercock, 1770, pp. 26. "Evidence [we are told] of what Lady Hewley considered included in the term 'Christ's Holy Gospel,' there is none; nor is there evidence to shew what opinions, sincerely entertained, she would have censured."—Hist. p. 138. Direct and absolute proof there may not be, but the strongest presumptive evidence that the case admits assuredly there is. Mr. Hunter explains the term by "*the truths* of the Gospel," and admits that it "implies some precise limitation," and places *some* religious teachers "without the pale which surrounds the preachers of Christ's holy Gospel." Hist. Def. pp. 22, 59, 60.

"The Gospel is, no doubt, in itself, one and unalterable."—Observations, &c. p. 23.

Mr. Cooper says "there is ample testimony that Lady Hewley professed Presbyterian doctrines; and it must be presumed she professed such doctrines as prevailed amongst that denomination of Dissenters at the end of the seventeenth century."—Substance of Speech, p. 20.

previously to Arianism having *appeared* among the English Presbyterians. Even conceding that “heresy on the doctrine of the Trinity was *prevalent*” during the first few years of the eighteenth century, no single instance can be produced to prove that Arian doctrines had been avowed, or “were openly preached, by members of the Presbyterian body,” till several years after her death. That the orthodox character of the entire denomination, at least in reference to the Trinity, remained inviolate and unimpeachable during the early years of the reign of George I., will appear from the following testimonies. The author of a small tract, entitled “The Description of a Presbyterian, exemplified in his Character,” &c. 8vo. 1715, says, “They believe and receive the doctrine of the three famous Creeds, usually called the *Apostles’*, the *Nicene*, and the *Athanasian*; whereby they are distinguished from diverse sects and opinionists, called *Arian*, *Socinian*, *Sabellian*.—p. 6.

Dr. Calamy, in a Charge delivered in December, 1716, at the ordination of several ministers, thus addresses them:—“If you have any thing to do with *Deists*, *Socinians*, *Arians*, or *Papists*, carry it to them with humanity; and let them see that you bear no ill-will to their persons, how much soever you dislike their principles or practices,”—p. 30. In the Brief Account of the Protestant Dissenters in England, annexed to this Charge,\* he says—“After the Revolution, under king William of glorious memory, the parliament gave liberty to all that were not satisfied to fall in with the Church of England, (provided they owned the doctrine of the Trinity, as they of whom I am giving here an account, did and do universally,) to act according to their consciences in matters of religion; the benefits of which law they still enjoy.” p. 42.

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Since the preceding pages were written, the Decree of the Vice-Chancellor for the removal of the trustees, and discontinuance of grants to Unitarian ministers and students, has been affirmed by Lord Lyndhurst, in a luminous, able, and, on all the points raised in the case, most decisive Judgment, which, with the joint Opinion of two learned judges, has been published, with his lordship’s permission.

\* Published with a Sermon at another Ordination, 1717.



Although the memorable debate at Salter's Hall, in 1719, took place several years after the close of the period to which the preceding pages refer, a few observations may properly be made upon that important event.

Mr. Hunter, who speaks of "the affair of Peirce and the Devonshire ministers," as having occurred "at *the very beginning* of the eighteenth century,"\* says, in reference to the Salters' Hall meeting,—“Anti-Trinitarian opinions had prevailed to a great extent among the Presbyterians of Devonshire.”† The discussion arose in 1718; when three ministers at Exeter were charged with having embraced Arian tenets. Two of them, Messrs. Peirce and Hallet, though they expressly “disowned the peculiar opinions of Arius,” were abruptly “ejected,” by the committee who managed the concerns of the three united congregations in that city. Debates arising among the United Ministers of Devonshire and Cornwall on this occasion, the London ministers were consulted, and a meeting of those belonging to the three denominations, Presbyterian, Independent, and Baptist, was held at Salters' Hall, February 19th, 1719, to consider of “Advices for Peace,” to be sent to their brethren in the West. A division took place on the 24th, after warm debates, on the question, whether those Advices should be accompanied by a subscription declaratory of their own firm belief in the doctrine of the Trinity, as expressed in the first article of the Church of England, and the Assembly's Shorter Catechism. A small majority decided in the negative. Mr. Hunter calls this “the solemn determination of the ministers there assembled for the purpose of determining the question, that they would not refuse to admit to the ministry persons who had not subscribed their belief in the doctrine of the Trinity;”‡ and, according to the English Presbyterian Association, the “chief question debated was, Whether those who presented themselves for ordination, should subscribe their belief in that doctrine.”§ But this question could scarcely have arisen; candidates for the ministry not having been previously required to *subscribe*

\* Hist. Def. p. 44.

† Ibid. p. 45.

‡ Ibid. p. 45.

§ Hist. p. 22.

their belief in any doctrine. They had indeed been invariably, and still were, required to make a public declaration of their holding *the orthodox faith*, in regard to this and other distinguishing truths of the Christian system. Mr. Hunter elsewhere says, the question referred to the London ministers was, "whether, when a candidate for the ministry presented himself for Presbyterian ordination, he should be required to make an *open profession* that he held the doctrine of the Trinity;"\* and states that Dr. Oldfield, the moderator, "consented to admit into the ministry persons who did not *profess* to receive it."† In support of these allegations no evidence is produced, nor is the conclusion which Mr. Hunter draws from the result of the whole debate, sustained by the subsequent history of the Presbyterian body. A tract was published in 1721, by "this very Dr. Oldfield, who was for many years one of the most influential of the Presbyterian ministers,"‡ entitled, "A brief, practical, and pacific Discourse of God: and of the Father, Son, and Spirit, and of our concern with them." He says, "By the New Testament we are most expressly taught, that there is a FATHER, SON, and SPIRIT, with whom we are concerned in like manner as with God. Nor is this the voice of a single text, but runs, in a manner, through the whole New Testament, as the sum and substance of the Christian Institution." p. 17. He also speaks of "the Uncreated Being, and Creating Power, with other Divine Perfections of the Sacred Three," whom he calls "one JEHOVAH." pp. 65, 69.

Of the minority, half, at least, were Presbyterians; among these, four of the most eminent pastors of churches in the metropolis, all Salters'-Hall lecturers, Messrs. Tong, Robinson, Jeremiah Smith, and Reynolds, published in the same year a book, entitled "The Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity stated and defended." The following extract will shew the sentiments entertained by the authors concerning the paramount importance of this doctrine:—

"That there may be Truths, both of great evidence and of great importance, which yet some men of good sense and learning do not discern, is generally acknowledged; such are the matters in contro-

\* Hist. Def. p. 45,

† Ib. p. 43.

‡ Ib. pp. 42, 43.

versy between Protestants and Papists, and between Christians and Jews. The truths controverted are sufficiently evident, and of the greatest consequence; and yet many learned, sober, and inquisitive men, not only doubt of them, but deny them. Of this their ignorance and error, there must be a cause, and a culpable one, which is not to be sought for in the doctrines themselves, or in the revelations we have of them; but in the minds of those that do not receive them. It may, indeed, be difficult for them to discern where it lies; but it is known to God to be such as will justify him, though he should leave them to all the evil consequences of their criminal mistakes.

“The real importance of any doctrine does not depend upon subjective evidence, that is, upon the certain persuasion I have of it in my own mind. It is neither less true nor less important because I am in doubt concerning it. The importance of it is an intrinsic thing; it arises out of its own nature, and the place it naturally holds in the chain of Scripture principles, and the direct influence it has upon the vitals of our Religion as Christian. And though I should not discern this, another may; and if he does, it will not only be lawful for him, but kind in him, to convince me how essential a truth that is which I reject; and how destructive the rejection of it would be, in its own nature, to my soul. . . .

“As to this particular Doctrine that lies before us, concerning the *Godhead* of our Lord JESUS CHRIST and the HOLY SPIRIT, we wonder, indeed, there should be any doubt raised among us at this time of day, as to the *Truth* of it; but we wonder much more, any question should be made about the *Importance* of it. Surely it must be either a very important truth or a very important error. For either side to mistake created nature for uncreated, finite for infinite, necessary for contingent, supreme for subordinate, must unavoidably introduce the greatest confusion and falsehood into all our conceptions, affections, and devotions.

If our Lord Jesus Christ be really God by Nature, of the same Substance with the Father and the Spirit, it must be highly displeasing to him to have that supreme glory of his despised and denied by those that yet call him their Lord and Saviour; and though they may say a thousand honourable things of him in other respects, yet, while they deny him that which is his highest excellence, they have little reason to think he will accept any offering at their hands.

“But if he be not God by Nature, it must be a great provocation to him that is so, to see us, both in private and public acts of adoration, *giving away his Glory* to another. This surely must be in danger of turning our religious assemblies into sacrilegious confederacies against the one living and true God.

“And while those that are yet called Christians are thus divided about the Object of Divine Worship, there must needs be great confusion and jealousies among the worshippers; each party being afraid,

lest they should have fellowship with idols. And it will hardly be possible for them to worship God together, in the same places, and under the same administration, with a good conscience, or to their mutual comfort and edification.

“For, whatever may be pretended, this is not a controversy about some metaphysical, abstract notions of personality, subsistence, modal distinctions in the divine Nature; in these there will be always room left for different speculations and sentiments. It is not a controversy about forms of church government, or degrees of order and office there; nor about rites and ceremonies in external worship, like that depending between us and the National Church; nor about the subject, time, and manner of administering a particular ordinance, as that between us and the Antipædobaptists; but it is a controversy about the very Object of Religious Worship,—whether that be the only one living and true God; which has been ever acknowledged to be a point of the greatest moment, both in natural and revealed religion. We really think the *Godhead* of CHRIST and the HOLY SPIRIT to be the primary article of revealed religion, and the *Unity of the Godhead* the primary article of natural religion; and when these are called in question, we think we are called up to defend them.”\*

The majority, a considerable portion of whom were Independents and Baptists, not only profess an “agreement with the sentiments of their brethren, concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity,” but say “We believe with our brethren, that the Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity lies at the *Foundation of Christianity*, and runs through the whole of it, and is the proper *frame and scheme* of the Christian Religion.”†

Both sides being thus agreed in esteeming this a vitally important and strictly Fundamental Doctrine, on which the entire scheme of Christian Truth is erected, they consequently held that a denial or rejection of it was a fatal error, destructive of the Gospel as a message of “life and salvation,” and therefore of all well-grounded hope toward God, or in the words of Baxter, who calls the doctrine “the very sum of all Christian religion,” “damnable, as plainly subverting the Foundation of our Faith.”

\* Introduction (by Mr. Tong,) pp. 9—14. They say, “This Article of the Trinity, hath been no point of difference between the Church of England, and the chief bodies of Dissenting Protestants in the nation;” and quote the Confession of the Westminster Assembly, and the Savoy Declaration, as “the PRESBYTERIAN and CONGREGATIONAL CONFESSION.” Pp. 82, 83.

† Second Part of a Reply to the Vindication of the Subscribing Ministers, 1719, p. 51.

Such—if the writings of their principal divines are an authentic source of information—such is the evidence abundantly supplied, to prove what were the principles, opinions, and usages of the English Presbyterians during the interval that elapsed between the Restoration and the accession of the Brunswick family. Holding certain theological opinions, they wanted neither courage to avow, nor zeal to defend them. Pusillanimous concealment, and dishonest evasion or disguise, were equally foreign from their feelings of propriety and their convictions of duty. On the contrary, they were forward on all suitable occasions to profess and publish to the world their “soundness of judgment in matters of faith.” They did not, it is true, impose upon others the human formularies in which their tenets were expressed, by requiring subscription to those formularies as a test of orthodoxy; but they approved and adopted for themselves, as, in their judgment, accordant with Holy Scripture, the opinions declared in the documents compiled by their predecessors. Agreeing likewise, as they solemnly professed, with the *doctrine* of the Established Church, they readily complied with the requirement of subscribing the Articles in which that doctrine is embodied. Advocates, it is true, they were, for charity and moderation, but they carefully distinguished between minor and subordinate doctrines, and truths essential to Christianity. Allowing diversity of apprehension in reference to the former, they regarded the latter as, from their very nature, of paramount importance and indispensable necessity. Such, in their estimation, were the doctrines of the Trinity and the Atonement.

Presbyterian in name, they were not generally such in opinion, and in practice all of them were Congregational. From the body called by that name they differed on some points of church government, and the administration of discipline; but the diversity of judgment and practice gradually diminished till it almost became a mere nominal distinction. The union formed between the two bodies in 1691, which in a few years met with a serious obstruction among the ministers in the metropolis, took complete and permanent effect in the country, where harmony continued without interruption.

Orthodox themselves from deliberate conviction, they were not indifferent to purity of doctrine, or unconcerned to preserve their churches in future generations from the contamination of mischievous error. They adopted precautionary measures for this purpose, embuing the minds of their youth with the doctrines contained in their orthodox Catechism, demanding from all candidates for the ministry a solemn confession of the orthodox faith, and taking vigorous means to repress the progress of erroneous tenets, when any serious aberration from orthodoxy was avowed or detected. They retained, during a period of prevailing error and impiety, their firm adherence to the doctrine professed by their fathers concerning the Three Personal Distinctions in the unchangeable essence of the Eternal Being. The emotions of indignant horror with which they contemplated antitrinitarian opinions are clearly indicated in the strong epithets which they applied to those among their contemporaries who had imbibed the tenets of Socinus, associating them with Deists, Mahometans, Freethinkers, and Atheists, and calling them Heretics, Blasphemers, and Infidels. The peculiar dogma of the Polish Socinians, that Jesus Christ was a mere man, they invariably regarded with feelings of the strongest indignation, abhorrence, and disgust. The distinctive tenet of Arius, that Christ was the first and greatest of created beings, when revived and propagated in England about 1710, met with no encouragement from them. A modification of this opinion, more accurately designated "Arianized Trinitarianism" than any form of Unitarianism, and nearly allied to the semi-Arianism of Dr. Clarke, was adopted, in 1718, by two Presbyterian ministers in Exeter. Their offensive tenet was, the essential supremacy of the Father, and the consequent natural inferiority and subordination of the Son, whom, however, they believed to have been himself uncreated and eternal, and the creator of all things. Yet this *comparatively* slight deviation from the orthodox faith excited the surprise, and produced the startling effect, of a sudden shock, immediately calling forth so strong a revulsion of feeling, that the two ministers were in a summary, and perhaps irregular, manner

ejected from the chapel which they had occupied. Two or three other individuals, who imbibed the same or kindred errors, met with similar treatment.

Such were the English Presbyterians of Lady Hewley's time, and their immediate successors; and such were the few nominal Arians who appeared among them within a short time after her death. But what are the modern Unitarians? Are they a class of religious professors whom, there is reason to believe, those Presbyterians would now acknowledge as their legitimate descendants? What vestige of affinity can be traced in these degenerate successors? What one feature of resemblance to their forefathers do they bear? Let me appeal to themselves. Which of the ecclesiastical usages of your predecessors do you retain? Which of their dearest principles, or most cherished sentiments, do you hold sacred? Which of their opinions on theological points, deemed by them of vital importance, have you not abandoned? You do not even adhere to the faith of the original followers of Socinus, by whose name you refuse to be called. He, with marvellous inconsistency, considered Jesus, though a mere man, a proper object of religious adoration, and called the contrary opinion an "IMPIOUS tenet." An eminent living defender of your principles, in assigning reasons why you "disclaim the title of Socinians," states, that you "worship not Jesus Christ."\* You belong not, therefore, to "those who invoke the name of Jesus Christ," whom you refuse to acknowledge as *your* Sovereign LORD. The doctrine of Atonement you altogether renounce, affirming, that the great means of effecting our deliverance, from I know not what evil, is "the *doctrine* of Christ confirmed by his death," and "refusing to confess him as suffering in our stead, and procuring the pardon of our sins." The "distinction between those *essential* articles of faith, which cannot be rejected without perdition, and the *non-essentials*, on which men may safely differ," you reject.† While you disclaim the use of *any* doctrine as a bond of ecclesiastical union,

\* "A Plea for Unitarian Dissenters. By Robert Aspland." 8vo. 1813. p. 71.

† The Racovian Catechism, the symbol of the Polish Socinians, thus defines the visible church—"A society of such men as hold and profess saving doctrine"—

you do, however, profess certain tenets, of which the following propositions embrace those relating to the Trinity—"The Father alone is the true and eternal God: the Son is by nature, and rank in the scale of being, only a highly-distinguished, an eminently-exalted individual of the human race; by office, only a teacher truly sent from God, the greatest of the prophets: the Holy Spirit is "not a person, a distinct, intelligent agent, but only the power, the influence or energy of God." Professing "a general agreement" among yourselves, "as to the object of worship—one God, the Father," you differ, on that primary article of religion, from all the other sects and churches of Christendom; and "with other classes of seceders from the Established Church, except a general belief in Christianity, you have scarcely any thing in common, save the name of Dissenters."\* You have, and can have, no sympathy or religious communion with Trinitarians; to whom you "impute an idolatrous doctrine and practice, with the want of sense to perceive it, or of integrity to avow it."† Can such religious professors be the true representatives of a body who zealously contended for the doctrine of the Trinity, as an essential article of revealed religion, and even considered it the very basis of the Christian system of doctrine?

and adds, "to hold the saving doctrine is the essence of the Church of Christ." Translation, with notes and illustrations, by Thomas Rees, F.S.A. (now LL.D.) 1818. pp. 369, 370. "If (says Peirce) men profess and preach any thing inconsistent with the main essential doctrines of Christianity, they subvert men's souls, and cannot be the means of saving them." Fifteen Sermons, p. 19.

\* "Two Discourses on the Union between God and Christ, and the Grounds of Unitarian Nonconformity. By Thomas Madge." 8vo. 1835, pp. iii. iv., 105.

† The Scripture Testimony to the Messiah. By John Pye Smith, D.D. vol. iii. p. 280. The author, one of the most learned and candid of critics, adds—"The controversy is of a kind which goes down to the very foundations of religious belief, separating us by an awful chasm, and leaving scarcely any common ground to the two parties. The systems are opposite in the most momentous and essential respects: they admit no hope of conciliation; they cannot both subsist as mutually recognized forms of our common Christianity; one must exterminate the other."

## THE END.





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